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FOURTH SESSION OF THE FIFTIETH PARLIAMENT
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AND NORTHERN IRELAND
THIRTY-NINTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SESSION 1990-91

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THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

IN THE FOURTH SESSION OF THE FIFTIETH PARLIAMENT OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND
[WHICH OPENED 25 JUNE 1987]

THIRTY-NINTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 181**

SECOND VOLUME OF SESSION 1990-91

House of Commons

Monday 19 November 1990

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

SOCIAL SECURITY

Low-paid Workers

1. **Mr. Steen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will review the Government's policy towards helping those in low-paid employment.

The Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Tony Newton): A range of improvements designed to help the low-paid have been implemented in both the tax and social security systems. As a result of our policies, families now keep more of their earnings. Moreover, family credit now provides considerable extra help to boost the incomes of well over 320,000 working families.

Mr. Steen: Is my right hon. Friend aware that there is often no incentive for single-parent families to go out and earn money, especially in low-wage areas such as south Devon where they are often better off staying at home and doing nothing than going out and finding paid work? Does my right hon. Friend agree that the Government should be encouraging the work ethic and making it more worth while for those who wish to work to help themselves?

Mr. Newton: Yes, indeed I do. My hon. Friend will be aware that within the past month, or just over a month, we have improved the earnings disregard in respect of in-work benefits—housing benefit and community charge benefit—with an eye on precisely the problem that many lone parents face. My hon. Friend will be aware also that a major ingredient in the child maintenance proposals that we published in the White Paper at the end of last month is directed to the same end.

Mr. Pike: Does the Secretary of State recognise that, while these measures may be welcomed and should be supported, the Government should be doing more to ensure fair pay and perhaps a national minimum wage to help those on low pay? Is not it a fact that low pay does not save jobs and that increases in productivity achieved by farm workers and others on low pay have not saved their jobs?

Mr. Newton: The most likely result of any minimum wage policy of the kind that the hon. Gentleman appears to be advocating, and that his party is thought to advocate, would be the destruction of a considerable number of jobs. The right course is to concentrate on encouraging employment and on reducing taxation and national insurance contributions so that people can get a good return from their work.

Mr. Tony Banks: May I welcome the Secretary of State to the Government Dispatch Box on the first occasion on which I am asking a question on social security from the Opposition Front Bench? I hope soon to be answering such questions. In view of the right hon. Gentleman's previous answer, will he explain why all other members of the EEC are able to present national minimum wage levels when he says that if we were to do that—the next Labour Government will be doing it—we would be destroying jobs?

Mr. Newton: Without entirely endorsing all the hopes and aspirations that the hon. Gentleman expressed in his introductory remarks, I welcome him to the Opposition Front Bench. I am sure that we all look forward to his being on the Opposition Front Bench for many happy years.

Perhaps lurking in the hon. Gentleman's supplementary question is the reason why Britain has been more successful than virtually any other country in Europe in creating new jobs.

Maintenance

2. **Ms. Short:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he will reconsider his decision financially to penalise mothers who refuse to name the father of their child.

Mr. Newton: We have no plans to change the proposal that, where a caring parent has no good cause not to claim maintenance for the children but refuses to assist in obtaining it, there should be a power to make a reduction in the income support allowance for her own personal needs. Such a decision would be taken only after full and careful consideration of all the circumstances and would of course be subject to the normal rights of appeal.

Ms. Short: Does the Secretary of State believe personally that it is right to cut the income of lone mothers living on benefits who, for their own good reasons, refuse to name or pursue for maintenance the fathers of their children? Surely, a much better system is to make it easier to claim maintenance, to create an incentive to do so and then leave it to each individual woman to decide in her own circumstances what is best for herself and her child.

In my view, the Government's proposals are an outrageous invasion of privacy——

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Ask a question.

Ms. Short: I have asked two supplementary questions, and I am making one minor comment.

Several Hon. Members: Ask a question.

Ms. Short: This is the usual harassment. I started with a supplementary question.

The Government's proposals—*[Interruption.]* Conservative Members are embarrassed by them and do not wish to hear what I have to say.

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is Question Time. Hon. Members must let the hon. Lady finish.

Ms. Short: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Government's proposals are an outrageous invasion of privacy and have caused real fear among many women who have left difficult relationships. May I ask the right hon. Gentleman——

Hon. Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is a little unfair. The hon. Lady said that she wanted to ask two questions; she cannot have three bites.

Ms. Short: Now that the Tory wets are developing some spine, will they stand up for what is right? I have great respect for the Secretary of State and I find it hard to believe that he believes in these outrageous proposals.

Mr. Newton: As I have said on a number of occasions, it is no more right that a caring parent should be able simply to choose not to claim maintenance than it is right for the absent parent to choose not to pay it.

We have put forward a carefully balanced set of proposals, which include incentives. As a result of the mechanisms that we are setting up, it will be much easier to claim maintenance. However, we thought it right to include the possibility of a sanction, with all the usual rights of appeal, if someone unreasonably refuses to co-operate.

Mr. Favell: Can my right hon. Friend confirm that many families who maintain their children find it difficult to makes ends meet and that it is outrageous to expect them to maintain the children of those who simply do not want to name the fathers?

Mr. Newton: The White Paper acknowledges, as I am sure that the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) will acknowledge, that there will be circumstances in which it would not be appropriate to expect a name to be given and we shall set up careful procedures to assess different cases. Nevertheless, my hon. Friend is right to suggest that to permit circumstances in which people could, with no good cause, simply pass on the bill to the taxpayers—including other families with children—would be wrong.

Mr. Kirkwood: The Government's White Paper refers to exemptions for families with previous unhappy experiences—for example, rape or incest—and that is right. Will the right hon. Gentleman go further and help the House to understand what the Government have in mind for such exemptions? For example, would a caring parent who had been granted a divorce on the ground of unreasonable behaviour involving violence have the right to withhold the name of the other parent?

Mr. Newton: She might. As is the practice in other parts of the social security system, we expect that well-trained officers would give full and careful consideration to all the circumstances. What would not be right, and what few people believe would be right, would be to bring about circumstances in which someone had only to say that she feared violence from the absent father for that absent father to be let off, or for the absent father only to make a threat of violence for that father not to be pursued for maintenance.

Mr. Nicholls: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the first responsibility for maintaining children lies with the parents, and that the role of the state applies only where parents cannot or will not fulfil their obligations? Is not it remarkable that the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) should ask such questions? Does not her failure to acknowledge the principle that I have enunciated show that she has a view of family policy that is unsustainable?

Mr. Newton: I agree with my hon. Friend about where the basic responsibility lies and the proposals in the White Paper reflect it much more clearly than ever before.

Mr. Frank Field: According to the Government's figures, 95 per cent. of mothers immediately and voluntarily give information about the father. Why do not the Government do something to get contributions from that group of fathers so that mothers can have some of the freedoms to which the right hon. Gentleman referred?

Mr. Newton: In the interests of accuracy, I should make it clear that we think that that figure may be a bit on the high side because it is drawn from a particular sample——

Mr. Field: The Government published the figure.

Mr. Newton: Yes, but we think that the sample might have gone a bit astray—[HON. MEMBERS: "Ah!"] I thought that it might be sensible to put that on the record. We think that the proper figure is about 75 per cent. That is based on the best information that we have from our local offices.

Whatever the figure, as I said when I introduced the White Paper, the more that caring parents generally think it right to co-operate, the weaker is the case for ignoring those who choose not to co-operate.

Lone Parents

5. **Mr. Irvine:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the cost of income-related benefits paid to lone parents and their children in the latest year for which information is available and in 1978-79.

Mr. Newton: Between 1978-79 and 1989-90, the amount of income-related benefits paid to lone parents and their families increased from just under £650 million to nearly £3,000 million.

Mr. Irvine: Does my right hon. Friend agree that from any point of view that represents a massive increase? Can he confirm that only three in 10 lone parents currently receive regular maintenance payments from their partners? Does not that indicate that the Government's new proposals for securing more effective maintenance of children should be implemented with the utmost urgency?

Mr. Newton: I can confirm that only about one third of caring parents receive regular maintenance payments. The proposals in the White Paper, "Children Come First", are directed at increasing that proportion as a matter of urgency.

Mr. Flynn: Will the Secretary of State confirm that many lone parents have been widowed or are in families where there has been long-term sickness? Does he agree that next year, one quarter of a million of families will be denied the full value of the extra £1 benefit for the first born? Those families will suffer a net cut in their allowances of 4·7 per cent. by April 1991 compared with April this year. Will not the right hon. Gentleman confess that the changes in child benefit were a cynical attempt by the Government to buy back maximum political benefit at minimum cost? Will he also confess his shame at having cut that money from families most in need—those that have suffered as a result of long-term sickness or bereavement?

Mr. Newton: I cannot accept phrases such as "a cynical attempt" and "minimum cost" when we are talking about additional expenditure of public money to the extent of well over £250 million. As to the interaction between an increase in child benefit and other benefits, be they national insurance or, more notably, income-related benefits, the policy being pursued is in line with that which has been followed for many years.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the Opposition should speak in support of child benefit rather than disparagingly about the increases that are secured?

Mr. Newton: Yes.

Care Homes

6. **Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he has received regarding the proposed £5 increase in income support payments to care home residents.

The Minister for Social Security and Disabled People (Mr. Nicholas Scott): A number of bodies and individuals, including the National Federation of Housing Associations, Age Concern, the National Council for Voluntary Organisations and the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux, have written to us about the proposed increases.

Mr. Hinchliffe: Is the Minister aware that the average increase in private care home fees in the Wakefield district this year is 17 per cent., compared with a 3 per cent. increase in income support payments that the Government announced recently? Has the Minister examined the evidence sent to his Department by Age Concern, showing that a number of elderly retired people are having to return to work, to earn money so that they can contribute towards the care home fees incurred by even more elderly relatives? Is not it scandalous that, in addition, the Government propose to withdraw housing benefit from vast numbers of care home residents?

Mr. Scott: This year, after a tight survey period, we devoted the largest-ever increase to helping those in residential care and nursing homes. The Government are to be congratulated on that achievement. The limits on residential care homes rose by £45 per week between April 1985 and August of this year—by 41 per cent. against an inflation rate of 35 per cent. As to changes in housing benefit rules for those in residential care homes, they will apply almost overwhelmingly to those who have capital of between £8,000 and £16,000.

Mr. Durant: Would the Minister like to remind the House what these increases are, as the question only mentions £5? Also, will he tell us how many people are benefiting?

Mr. Scott: Thousands of people will benefit as a result of these increases. The uprating has cost some £230 million and the increases range from £5 per week increase to £45 per week. This year we have rightly devoted the most significant resources to those people in nursing homes who have had the greatest increase in costs.

Mr. Meacher: How can the Minister possibly justify a mere £5 per week increase in income support for residents in residential homes when the Price Waterhouse survey shows that the average running and capital costs of such homes are £172 per resident per week, whereas he has increased income support to only £160 a week. How can he justify only increasing income support for nursing homes to £255 per resident per week when Price Waterhouse reveals that the average running and capital costs in those homes is £350 per resident per week? Is not it clear that the haemorrhage of bankruptcies and closures of homes will continue and that the Government, having encouraged homes to be built in the first place, will carry the responsibility for the inevitable eviction of frail and elderly people?

Mr. Scott: First, the increase of £5 per week this year should be set against an increase of £10 per week April and

a further £5 per week in August, so the increase in the past year has been of the order of £20. We have produced the largest-ever increase in funds. Expenditure overall, as the hon. Gentleman knows, has increased from £10 million per year, which the Labour Government were spending when they went out of office, to £1·27 billion under this Government. We have shown our care for people in those circumstances and have demonstrated it with cash.

Pensioners (Investment Income)

8. **Mr. Neubert:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much the average pensioner's income from bank and building society deposits has changed since 1979.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Mrs. Gillian Shephard): My hon. Friend will be pleased to hear that the income which pensioners receive from savings more than doubled between 1979 and 1987.

Mr. Neubert: Can my hon. Friend say whether there has been a similar encouraging increase in income from occupational pensions in that period? How does this compare with the previous period—1974-79—when we were enjoying a Labour Government?

Mrs. Shephard: My hon. Friend will be equally pleased to hear that average incomes from occupational pensions in the same period grew by 77 per cent. His question about the way in which savings and incomes from occupational pensions behaved during the last Labour Government is the most significant, because such income fell by 16 per cent. during that period.

Mr. Flynn: Will the Minister balance the selective figures that she has been given by confirming that under the last Labour Government the percentage of pensions rose from 17·5 to 20·5 per cent. of male average earnings, while in the following years under the Conservative Administration they plummeted from 20·5 to a mere 16 per cent. of average male earnings?

Mrs. Shephard: What matters to pensioners is the way their average total net income rises. While expressing valedictions and regrets to the hon. Gentleman, I must say that under this Government, from 1979 to 1987 pensioners' average total net income rose by more than 31 per cent. in real terms. That is what the hon. Gentleman should remember.

Arcola Street Office, Hackney

9. **Ms. Abbott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he next plans to visit Arcola street social security office.

Mr. Scott: My right hon. Friend has no plans to do so, but my noble Friend Lord Henley visited the office on 9 November 1990.

Ms. Abbott: Is the Minister aware that if he visited our Hackney social security offices he would see how London claimants continue to receive one of the worst services in the country and how Hackney residents suffer under his Poor Law regime? I draw to his attention the case of Mrs. S. Moore of 156 Evelyn Court, Amhurst road, London E8, who is disabled but was refused a grant for a pair of shoes because they were deemed to be of low priority. What sort of social security regime refuses disabled people money for shoes?

Mr. Scott: In general, I believe that those within the area of that local office are served well by the staff there. The hon. Lady will not expect me to comment on an individual case that she presents to me across the Floor of the House. The performance targets are being met. I know that the hon. Lady has a harmonious relationship with the management of that office and that the people there do their best to meet the points that she puts to them.

Mr. Jack *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: I hope that there is an Arcola street in Fylde.

Mr. Jack: There is an Arcola element in my question, Mr. Speaker. Can my right hon. Friend confirm that all benefit claimants at Arcola street and other social security offices will benefit from the work carried out in my constituency by the Information Technology Services Agency, which has been working on a £1·8 billion project to computerise the social security system and thus improve benefits for claimants?

Mr. Scott: I am sure that Arcola street, where computerisation for the pensions system will come on stream next February and for income support next April, will benefit from the efforts that we have put into operational strategy as a whole.

Pensioners (Mortgages)

10. **Mr. Moss:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proportion of pensioners make mortgage repayments; and how much of next April's rise in the basic state pension is attributable to rising interest and mortgage rates in the 12 months to September of the current year.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: As my hon. Friend will be aware, the retirement pension will be increased by 10·9 per cent. from April 1991, once again honouring the Government's commitment to protect fully the value of the state pension against changing prices. The corresponding September figure for the retail prices index less mortgage interest payments was 9·5 per cent. The latest information shows that, in 1987, 49 per cent. of pensioners owned their own homes and 4 per cent. made mortgage repayments.

Mr. Moss: I thank the Minister for that reply. Does she agree that the figures show that about 15 per cent. of this year's substantial increase in the pension reflects rising mortgage costs—an expense which fewer than one in 20 pensioners have to pay? Does not that represent a tremendous bonus for the majority of pensioners in this country?

Mrs. Shephard: Yes, and I am delighted that it should be so.

Mr. Meacher: As rising interest and mortgage rates are a reflection of the Government's economic incompetence and have caused misery to millions, is not it brass neck for the Minister to try to make a virtue out of it by claiming credit for a bigger pension increase, which the Government did their utmost to avoid? If the Government are so solicitous about the welfare of pensioners, why have

they blocked a bigger pension rise for pensioners in each of the past 11 years by breaking the uprating link with earnings? Is not it hypocrisy for the Government to try to feed that sort of soft question to Tory Back Benchers so that they can pretend that the Government are generous when, in fact, the Government have taken £22 billion off pensioners by breaking the earnings link?

Mrs. Shephard: Conservatives need no lessons in economic competence from the hon. Gentleman. I know that he fully understands that the Government have a dual policy on pensions—fully to uprate the basic pension in line with prices, which his Government were unable to do during their period in office, and to pursue other policies that Opposition Members steadfastly oppose, such as to increase choice in pension provision. It is not the Conservative party which wishes to turn personal pensions on their head.

Pensioners

11. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he will meet pensioners' representatives to discuss pensions, standing charges, concessionary fares and other matters; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: We regularly meet representatives from pensioners' organisations. Most recently, I met a delegation from the National Federation of Retirement Pensions Associations.

Mr. Skinner: If the Government meet pensioners' organisations in the next few weeks, they will hear from those representatives that pensioners have been robbed of more than £13 per week as a result of the change in the system in 1979 when the Tory Government came to office. That system allows Ralph Halpern to pick up a pension of £9,000 per week while other pensioners in London, Bolsover and elsewhere do not have two ha'pennies to rub together. Why should those pensioners have to pay for their travel while the Prime Minister gallivants around the world on taxpayers' money? Why should they pay standing charges when the people at No. 10 Downing street do not pay a penny piece? There is one law for Ministers in this Government and another for the old age pensioners throughout Britain—get it changed!

Mrs. Shephard: Yet again I remind Opposition Members, in particular the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), that the Labour Administration most certainly did not honour their promises to pensioners when they were in power. I also remind the hon. Gentleman that during the five years to October 1989, standing charges fell, in real terms, whereas during the previous Labour Government electricity prices rose by 30 per cent. That is a measure of the Opposition's care for pensioners. Under this Government, pensioners' average net income has risen by 31 per cent. in real terms. That is something that the Labour party could never hope to emulate.

Mr. Soames: Does my hon. Friend nevertheless agree that the important point about caring for pensioners is that policies should not stand still and that we should consider all the time how better we can care for them? Will she look at the way in which the Germans and the French are able to provide an enhanced package of concessions for their old people, which makes their quality of life a great deal more agreeable?

Mrs. Shephard: I thank my hon. Friend for his question. I remind him and the House of the special help that has been provided by the Government for older and poorer pensioners. In October 1989, there was the special package, and a few weeks ago my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State made his uprating announcement. In Germany, pensioners get what they pay for. Pensions depend entirely on what people have earned during their working lives. There is no basic state retirement pension. Pensioners have to pay for their prescriptions. They also have to make a 6 per cent. contribution towards their health care. Moreover, the pensions choice that we provide in this country is being looked at carefully not only by Germany but by other European Community member states.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: What are the Government doing for a particular group of pensioners who are casualties of the Thatcher years? I refer to those people who were put out of work in their middle 50s and who have not worked since. When they reach pensionable age, they find that all that they are entitled to is the basic pension; there is no supplement from their earnings, or other employment. They find life extremely difficult, having been on benefit for many years. As those people are supposed to have made a sacrifice so that we could get British industry back on its feet, is not it time that the Government compensated them so that they can enjoy a decent life in retirement, instead of having to struggle on the basic state pension?

Mrs. Shephard: The point of the income-related benefits system is that the basic pension can be topped up by income support, community charge benefit and housing benefit. That provides a very good base for all the people described by the hon. Gentleman.

Family Credit

12. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the latest estimate of the number of individuals who will benefit from the Government's plans to reduce the number of hours which qualify for family credit from 24 to 15.

Mr. Newton: We estimate that 65,000 families where a parent is currently working between 16 and 24 hours will be better off from being able to qualify for family credit. In the longer term, we also expect the change in the hours rule to encourage more people to take up employment and claim family credit and to be better off as a result.

Mr. Arnold: I welcome the extension of family credit to less well-off families. Will not it be of value to parents, particularly mothers, who will be able to go out to work while their children are at school, to the benefit of their families and themselves?

Mr. Newton: That is precisely the point which we are seeking to meet. We felt that 24 hours was rather a long time for that purpose. I ought to make it clear that, while the change in the benefit rules will be particularly useful to many lone parents, it will also help all families with children.

Mr. Rowe: Does my right hon. Friend agree that this is another important step towards achieving what must eventually be the objective of all those policies: that people should not lose benefit when they behave in exactly the way that the Government seek to encourage? May we be assured that my right hon. Friend will continue to work towards that objective across the whole range of benefits?

Mr. Newton: That is an aspect of what I call the "children come first" package, to which I attach particular importance. I assure my hon. Friend that I shall continue to do everything that I can in the same direction.

Social Fund

13. **Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the working of social fund loans and grants.

Mr. Scott: The social fund has continued to provide valuable help to a large number of people in greatest need. Since the scheme began almost 2·5 million interest-free loans and over half a million non-repayable community care grants have been awarded at a total value of almost £500 million.

Mr. Lloyd: The Secretary of State tells the House about his "children come first" policy, but can he explain why my constituents are refused assistance in the form of a grant, for example, when new-born babies come into the family, when people such as the constituents of my hon. Friend the Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms. Abbott) want shoes or when my constituents are moved into unfurnished accommodation and need bedding or beds? Against that background, will the Minister explain through me to my constituents how he can justify the fact that some of the poorest people in Britain are told that they cannot have a grant? They are allowed a loan as long as, with their derisory income support, they can afford to pay it back, which, of course, many simply cannot.

Mr. Scott: As I said, a large number of grants have been given, including on many occasions grants to people who applied for a loan but were awarded a grant instead because it was thought more appropriate. We have increased the maternity payment from £85 to £100 and the capital limit has been raised for people aged 60 and over from £500 to £1,000. From January 1991 that will also apply to exceptional cold weather payments. We have demonstrated the flexibility of the social fund and its ability to react to changing circumstances.

Sir David Price: As a matter of urgency, will my right hon. Friend extend the use of the social fund to providing assistance for the families of British hostages held in Iraq and for returning refugees who in many cases come to this country penniless?

Mr. Scott: With regard to those who come from the Gulf and their relatives, we have liaised carefully with the Gulf support group. The response of the social fund has been first class. All flights from Iraq are met by officials from the Department of Social Security. People are given advice on how to pursue their claims with their local offices. Our officers sit alongside other advisers from the Foreign Office to make sure that the social security system plays its part; it also enables refugees to settle in Britain.

Mr. Alfred Morris: Does the Minister recall his reply to my letter about chronically sick and disabled people, among others, who have returned to the United Kingdom from Kuwait and Iraq since the invasion of Kuwait? Can he now update his reply and, in particular, say today whether the total resources of the social fund will be or may be increased to allow for those wholly unexpected new calls on its help?

Mr. Scott: Of course, we review the budget and the claims on the social fund during the course of the year. There is no reason to suppose that the claims resulting from the crisis in the Gulf will alter the overall level of the budget this year.

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Dickens?

Mr. Dickens: Well——

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman was rising.

Mr. Dickens: I had almost given up.

Mr. Speaker: One must never give up.

Mr. Dickens: Will my right hon. Friend the Minister confirm that the former system was a licence to print money, under which youngsters would leave home, obtain a house on demand and present the DSS office with a shopping list of 140 items that were paid for on demand? Now they must have a loan. They must justify it and pay it back interest free. Does my right hon. Friend agree that in return some other people receive benefits of the same amount of money, which is laundered from person to person? That is good news for taxpayers' money, is it not?

Mr. Scott: I agree with my hon. Friend that the abuse of the single payments scheme and its entirely open-ended growth could not have been afforded by any Government. We took the right steps to alter the system to the new social fund, which is operating fairly, quickly and flexibly.

Social Security Systems

17. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what lessons he estimates may be learned from a study of other countries' systems of social security; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: We can learn a great deal from a study of each other's systems, but we need to remember that they are set in different societies with different traditions and different economic backgrounds. In the European Community Social Security Ministers have agreed that the exchange of information and discussion of problems should be encouraged. In the wider context, Ministers maintain contacts with many countries—for example, recently my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State visited the United States of America to look at child support arrangements.

Mr. Thurnham: Has my hon. Friend had an opportunity to study the Swiss system with its much greater emphasis on individual, family and local community responsibility for welfare? May I recommend that she reads "Cradle to Grave" by Ralph Segalman and David Marsland?

Mrs. Shephard: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his kind suggestion. I am not very familiar with the features of the Swiss system that he describes, but comparisons

between the British social security system and those of other countries of the European Community conclude with a flattering picture of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Winnick: What possible justification can there be for our present social security system, under which those with a small income, in some cases no more than £54 a week to live on, are expected to pay more than £10 a week in rent because of changes in Government regulations? Is not that absolutely disgraceful? I have notified the Minister of many such cases involving my constituents. Is it a wonder that so many pensioners cannot give a damn whether the Prime Minister or the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) wins? What they want is the defeat of the Tory Government and a Labour Government in office.

Mrs. Shephard: That is possibly the most ingenious question that we have heard so far this afternoon. Well done to the hon. Gentleman. The safety net that is provided by income support, and which is also supported by housing benefit and community charge benefit, together with the state pension, provides an excellent system of support for pensioners.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Ordinations

28. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners, if he will estimate the financial consequences for the commissioners of the trend in ordinations in the past three years.

Mr. Michael Alison (Second Church Estates Commissioner, representing the Church Commissioners): There is no clear trend in ordinations in the past three years sufficient to suggest any significant change in the balance of the Commissioners' expenditure in future years.

Mr. Marshall: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the trend would be more encouraging if women were allowed to become fully frocked priests? Does he accept that just as Rabbi Julia Neuberger has been a distinguished theologian, many ladies could become caring, efficient parish priests? When does my right hon. Friend believe that the first lady Prime Minister will appoint the first lady bishop?

Mr. Alison: When my hon. Friend refers to women priests, he should be aware that there is likely to be a Measure on the ordination of women presented to Parliament in about 1993. My hon. Friend referred to women Prime Ministers. Perhaps I can say that there will be an opportunity to confirm a woman Prime Minister at a rather earlier date. I should put it on the record that no Prime Minister since Gladstone has made such an open and avowed Christian commitment as our present Prime Minister, or done so much for the Church.

Mr. Skinner: As the right hon. Gentleman used to be the Parliamentary Private Secretary to the Prime Minister and she might finish up on the barbed wire tomorrow night, will he in his capacity as a Church Commissioner recommend her to take on one of those jobs because she might need some extra work?

Mr. Alison: As usual, the hon. Gentleman makes constructive suggestions and helpful comments in the direction of the Church. It would not be out of character or beyond possibility for my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister perhaps to wish to offer herself for ordination at a much later date. It is perfectly possible for her to complete a long tour as Prime Minister, which I hope she will, perhaps retiring at 70, and then to offer herself for ordination. She would be most acceptable in the Church of England.

Church Commissioners (Abolition)

30. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners, whether he has received any representations about the abolition of the Church Commissioners; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alison: I have received no such representation.

Mr. Thurnham: Is my right hon. Friend aware of the feeling that it would be better to devolve that responsibility to local churches and parishes rather than for all the decisions to be made in London? Does he agree that that would involve the Church in a much more positive way in the affairs of the community?

Mr. Alison: I am bound to say with great respect to my hon. Friend that I am slightly suspicious of his question, because in the previous Session he sought to have the Church Commissioners left intact but removed to the constituency of Bolton, North-East. Now that that has been ruled out as a possibility, he is suggesting that they should be abolished altogether—I imagine because my hon. Friend suspects that they might be moved to the constituency of, say, Henley or Finchley. I believe that the Church Commissioners are best left as they are. They find only one third of the costs of financing the Church of England; the rest must come from the dioceses and the man in the pew. I think that they do a good job as they are.

Mr. Frank Field: Is not there a serious point here—[HON. MEMBERS: "No."] As it is beyond the wit of man for some hon. Members to appreciate a serious point if it is dangled in front of them, I shall still address my question assuming that it raises a serious point. Given that the Church has published a report to say that it is important for the Government to increase investment in inner-city areas, what serious consideration has been given to moving the Church Commissioners out of their plush offices in Westminster into one of the inner-city areas?

Mr. Alison: That question, which is serious, has been considered before. The hon. Gentleman will appreciate, however, that the Church Commissioners, for better or worse, acting through me as the Second Church Estates Commissioner, must have regular traffic with the General Synod, which is located in London and, above all, with this House, where Church Measures must be endorsed. It would be impracticable to discharge our duties fully to the House if the Church Commissioners were to be located in the hon. Gentleman's constituency or any other. I suspect that there would be hot competition for the location of the Church Commissioners and I believe that they are best left at Westminster.

HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION

Catering

31. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission, what representations he has received from those persons responsible for catering in the House of Commons.

Mr. A. J. Beith: (on behalf of the House of Commons Commission): None, Sir.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The hon. Gentleman who represents the House of Commons Commission is also a Liberal Democrat Member of Parliament. How does he react to the fact that the catering staff of the House of Commons have not had a single pay increase in the past seven years that meets the level of inflation? This year, when inflation is nearly 11 per cent., they will get a pay increase of 7 per cent., but the London weighting allowance has been frozen for the past three years. Does he really think that the House of Commons Commission is doing its job properly? How does he defend it?

Mr. Beith: The House of Commons Commission is required by statute to keep the pay of its staff in line with the civil service and that it seeks to do. If the hon. Gentleman has detailed evidence of the way in which the pay rates are out of line—much of the press comment on that subject is wildly inaccurate—I hope that he will bring it to my attention.

Mr. Dickens: Does the hon. Gentleman concede that the Chairman of the Catering Sub-Committee has just written to each and every hon. Member about the Christmas gratuity collection for the House of Commons staff? Opposition Members may table questions about the lot of the staff, but if they gave a little more generously this year than they did last year, the staff might be well treated.

Mr. Beith: I hope that hon. Members will respond generously to that appeal, but, however much is raised, that does not absolve the Commission from the responsibility that it seeks to carry out to pay its staff properly.

Christmas Bonuses

32. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission, if there are any proposals to pay Christmas bonuses to Palace staff.

Mr. Beith: No, Sir. However, as the hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens) pointed out, for many years hon. Members have made donations to a Christmas appeal for the staff of the Refreshment Department made by the Chairman of the Catering Sub-Committee.

Mr. Banks: Given how mean hon. Members are with regard to gratuities and tipping *[Interruption.]*—I tip all the time—it is no wonder that the staff are having such great difficulties in making ends meet from the money that they receive. Is the hon. Gentleman aware of the enormous pressure that there will be on the Refreshment Department at Christmas time, in particular when Conservative Members will be buying large quantities of goods from the souvenir shop and buying dinners for their constituency association members, in a vain attempt to prevent their deselection in view of the fact that they backed the wrong side? In view of that enormous pressure, would not a large bonus be appropriate this year?

Mr. Beith: Hon. Members in all parties are regular and extensive users of the facilities of the House, including those for the purchase of various items. I hope that the Tea Rooms are doing exceptionally good business while so much canvassing is in progress during the Conservative leadership election. However, it is not by way of extra subscriptions or appeals that the Commission seeks to ensure that its staff are properly paid; it is adhering to widely accepted pay rates.

Mr. Holt: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that, while Conservative Members might be spending large sums of money on gifts in the shop, a large number of Labour Members will be spending their money in the bars? I hope that they will spend a large amount on buying drinks for the bar staff.

Mr. Beith: I do not go to the bars very often, but I am led to believe that Members of all parties are to be found in them.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Telecommunications

33. **Mr. Jack:** To ask the Lord President of the Council what plans he has to improve telecommunications between Westminster, the European Commission and the European Parliament.

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John MacGregor): The Services Committee has been asked to consider a package of measures designed to strengthen links between this House and the main European Community institutions. Those proposals include arrangements to enable hon. Members to communicate more easily by telephone and post.

Mr. Jack: I thank my right hon. Friend for that reply. Can he give me any idea of the time scale of the conclusion of the discussions about these arrangements? My constituents in Fylde feel strongly that some good British common sense should reach the Commission and other European institutions early on, so that we can have our say before some of the more half-baked ideas creep out of Brussels and sadly become reality.

Mr. MacGregor: I hope that the time scale will allow the discussions to conclude reasonably soon. As for the form of the arrangements, they are likely to involve exchange numbers for the main European institutions being made available for direct dialling by Members of Parliament. It will be possible to go beyond the initial 12 once the software on the Palace of Westminster's own exchange is upgraded.

Mr. Winnick: Before such improvements are made, would not it be better to try to improve communication within the Cabinet? Is the Minister aware——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman's point is miles away from the question. That is not very good.

Mr. Winnick: If we are to improve communications with the European Parliament, it might be useful for the Cabinet to be able to communicate better than it can at present. Should not we bear in mind what was said yesterday by the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) about what occurred in the Cabinet over the Westland affair?

Mr. Speaker: I really do think that that is a bit wide of the European Parliament.

Sir Anthony Grant: Will the new arrangements include the Council of Europe, which is much wider than the EEC and the European Parliament?

Mr. MacGregor: I am not sure that the European institutions have been fully sorted out yet; however, I shall bear my hon. Friend's point in mind.

Scottish Affairs Select Committee

34. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Lord President of the Council what response he intends to make to the recommendation of the Procedure Committee in its report on the Select Committee system in the last Session of Parliament concerning the appointment of a Scottish Affairs Select Committee.

Mr. MacGregor: As the hon. Member knows, I cannot anticipate the Government's considered response to the report. I shall be replying to that and the other recommendations made in due course.

Mr. Kirkwood: Is not it a ridiculous indictment of the Government that they cannot find enough Conservative Members to man that important Committee? The Scottish Office covers many diverse areas of public life in Scotland, including housing, transport and agriculture. Is not it more rather than less important for there to be a Select Committee that oversees the work of the Scottish Office, irrespective of whether its members are Welsh, Irish or even the right hon. Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell)? Will he again consider getting Conservative Back Benchers to man this important Committee, so that the work of the Scottish Office can be properly overseen?

Mr. MacGregor: I have already said that I shall examine that matter again, but I am equally well aware that there have been several difficulties affecting the issue throughout the lifetime of this Parliament and I am not very hopeful of progress. The hon. Gentleman has raised many points relating to Scotland. As he will know some of those subjects are dealt with by other Select Committees, and the Scottish Office frequently gives evidence to those committees.

Mr. Soames: To follow on from the question of the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood), is my right hon. Friend aware that there are many Members such as me with seats in the south who would be happy and proud to serve on a Scottish Select Committee, because it would enable many of us to spend a great deal more time in Scotland than we are able to do at present?

Mr. MacGregor: I am not sure what sort of time my hon. Friend has in mind, but I shall consider his point.

Mr. Molyneaux: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that, at an earlier stage, some of us devoted much time to using our good offices in an attempt to resolve the difficulty? Will he encourage the reactivation of those discussions, to ensure that at least three component parts of the four parts of the United Kingdom enjoy and benefit from the oversight of a Select Committee?

Mr. MacGregor: I do not think that I can go further than I have today. I have been looking into the history of the progress of the matter during the lifetime of this Parliament.

Mr. Grocott: Does the Leader of the House accept that it is a pretty unfortunate precedent, particularly from a Government on the way out, not to establish democratic machinery simply because it is not in the Government's interests to do so? In this, one of his earliest performances as Leader of the House, will he at least establish clearly that his responsibility to the House is not simply to do what is convenient for the Government, but to do what is in the established, democratic traditions of the House, and set up the Select Committee?

Mr. MacGregor: I do not think that it was all one sided. Having looked at the history of it, I believe that there were differences of view on the matter at various times on both sides of the House. As I said, I shall look into it. I entirely reject the hon. Gentleman's belief that this Government are on the way out—quite the reverse.

Textline

35. **Mr. Harry Barnes:** To ask the Lord President of the Council what consideration has been given to reintroducing the textline facility into the branch library.

Mr. MacGregor: The reintroduction of textline in the branch library is not being considered because the suppliers of the standard textline service have now given general notice that that standard service is to be withdrawn altogether.

Mr. Barnes: I understood that it was Reuters that increased the price, which led to the removal of textline. Its facilities are available in the House of Commons Library. Will they be removed in the future? If facilities for hon. Members and their research assistants were removed, it would be as useful as hon. Members going round the Library with paper bags over their heads.

Mr. MacGregor: Apart from the fact that the service is being discontinued, there was a possible 400 per cent. increase in the Library charges over three years as a result of changes. In view of that, the Library Sub-Committee of the Services Committee concluded that the benefits of continuing the textline service could not be justified against the cost. The Library fully recognises the desirability of having some means of access to press material and is considering several alternative options.

Register of Members' Interests

36. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Lord President of the Council what representations he has received on the rules for the Register of Members' Interests; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: None, Sir.

Mr. Skinner: Is the Lord President aware that the register is being abused almost every year? Does he know that 19 Tory ex-Cabinet Ministers hold 59 directorships

between them and are raking in more than £1 million, not one penny of which is recorded in the register? Before there is a new batch of Tory ex-Cabinet Ministers in a few weeks' time and then another batch when we get into power, is not it high time that we got rid of the system, each Member of Parliament had only one job and we put an end to moonlighting?

Mr. MacGregor: I entirely reject the hon. Gentleman's last point, because it is for hon. Members to decide what they should do. As is clear from what the hon. Gentleman said at the beginning of his question, there is a great deal of talent that can be put to use outside the House and I do not think that it would be right to put a stop to that. The register is a matter for the Select Committee, which is looking at some possible changes to it.

Mr. Dickens: There is no doubt that many Conservative Members scrupulously enter everything with which they are connected on the register—it has got me into trouble. Does the Leader of the House accept that when we declare our position as unpaid consultants, we are often accused locally of having our fingers in too many pies because we have been scrupulously honest in placing everything on the register? There are many Opposition Members who should be making entries, but are not. However, I shall not name them today.

Hon. Members: Withdraw.

Mr. MacGregor: One of the matters that the Select Committee on Members' Interests is considering is whether to define the requirements of the register more precisely, so that hon. Members' interpretation of the rules is more consistent. That might help to deal with some of the points that my hon. Friend raised.

Hon. Members: He should withdraw.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not think that the hon. Gentleman intended to make any specific accusation. [HON. MEMBERS:"He did."] Order. If he did, he should draw the matter——

Mr. Dickens: Would you like me to name them, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker: No.

Mr. Dickens: I am——

Mr. Speaker: Sit down, please. If the hon. Gentleman has any such evidence, he should properly draw it to the attention of the Chairman of the Select Committee and not bandy it across the Floor of the House.

Televising of Parliament

37. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Lord President of the Council how many complaints have been received about the televising of the House.

Mr. MacGregor: I am not aware of any recent complaints arising specifically from the televising of the House's proceedings that fall within my direct responsibility or that of the Select Committee on Broadcasting. Naturally, hon. Members raise from time to time a variety of matters relating to the effect of televising on the work of the House and the Select Committee and the Supervisor of Broadcasting are always willing to consider them sympathetically.

Mr. Banks: I thought that it was most unfair of "Spitting Image" to portray the right hon. Gentleman as someone who was so little known in the country that he had to walk round with a personalised paper bag over his head. As it is clear that the electorate and hon. Members very much like the televising of Parliament, and to help the right hon. Gentleman perhaps to become the best known Leader of the House, could the Committee now consider the possibility of gavel-to-gavel coverage of our proceedings so that people can watch what they want to see rather than what broadcasting journalists think they ought to see?

Mr. MacGregor: I know that that point has been raised from time to time and the Select Committee can consider it again.

Statutory Instruments, &c.

Mr. Speaker: With the leave of the House, I will put together the two motions relating to statutory instruments.

Ordered,

That the draft Ministerial and other Salaries Order 1990 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Merchant Shipping (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Order 1990 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Patnick.]*

Points of Order

3.31 pm

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I apologise for not having been here when question 27 to the Church Commissioners was called. Will you consider whether the Sessional Orders also apply to London Underground and its lack of investment in the Victoria line which led to a plague of collapsing wheels and to my having to spend an inordinate time at Finsbury Park station awaiting the arrival of a train that did not come? My constituents and I would be delighted if you, Mr. Speaker, would pass that on to the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis, who could in turn pass it on to London Underground.

Mr. Speaker: I do not think that the Commissioner would reckon that that came within his responsibilities. In any case, the hon. Gentleman very nearly made it.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I ask you a constitutional question? If a Prime Minister is dismissed—a prospect which, in this case, I should warmly welcome—is there a requirement upon the House to divide at any stage?

Mr. Speaker: I do not answer hypothetical questions.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am not asking you about a particular case, although it is true that I qualified my opening remarks. I am asking you whether, in the event of a Prime Minister being dismissed, the House would be required to divide at any stage.

Mr. Speaker: The question is hypothetical, but my predecessors have regularly ruled that advice on procedures and other such matters is not given by the occupant of the Chair.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Oh?

Mr. Speaker: I mean, of course, advice on tactics.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: No; I do not think that I need any more.

Mr. Campbell-Savours *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am not prepared to give the hon. Gentleman that sort of advice.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Notwithstanding the advice that you cannot give, will you confirm that the ballot that is to take place tomorrow night is about the leadership of the Tory party and that, in this quaint little place of ours, it does not have anything much to do with who is Prime Minister? Knowing the Prime Minister's character and traits, there is half a chance that, if she were defeated, she would still come to the Dispatch Box and act out the role of Prime Minister. She might even force the Cabinet to reconsider the whole affair. It is not a matter of who is Prime Minister but of who is the leader of the Tory party. It might eventually be a matter for the Queen, and on that issue I am not very well informed. I do not know whether you are, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I can confirm to the hon. Gentleman that I believe that there is a contest for the leadership of the Conservative party.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is it in order for civil servants, who are supposed to be impartial, to involve themselves in giving briefings in the Tory party leadership campaign? Mr. Bernard Ingham is being used by the Prime Minister not as an impartial civil servant but as someone giving press briefings rubbishing the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine). Is that in order?

Mr. Speaker: I understand that Mr. Bernard Ingham has been giving press briefings for about 10 years.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is it not the case that the Queen calls on someone to take on the responsibility of Prime Minister? Do you therefore agree that, regardless of any ballot being held for the leadership of the Tory party—and much canvassing is taking place on the Conservative Benches as well as outside—it is entirely for Her Majesty to decide who will be Prime Minister? Therefore, it is likely that the present Prime Minister will continue in office regardless of any leadership ballot.

Mr. Speaker: I cannot answer such questions. First, I am not in any way involved because I have no vote, or anything like that. I cannot answer the hon. Gentleman's question, but I understand that discussions of this kind are going on and no doubt we shall hear more about them.

Mr. Corbyn: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I have already called the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Corbyn: This point of order is on a totally different subject. You may have heard on last night's news that a substantial number of Conservative Members have threatened to resign the Whip if the vote goes in a certain way. At what point do you, Mr. Speaker, or the House, get an opportunity to decide whether whoever emerges as the Tory party leader can command a majority in the House? That should be a matter for the House rather than for the market.

Mr. Speaker: It is certainly not a matter for the Chair.

Orders of the Day

Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

3.37 pm

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Peter Brooke): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Mr. Speaker: I have selected the reasoned amendment in the name of the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Brooke: The Bill is presented at a time when we have recently had further tragic confirmation of the ability of terrorists, both republican and so-called loyalists, to bring death and misery to men and women not just in Northern Ireland, but throughout the United Kingdom and beyond. I do not want now to rehearse the details of the present security situation, in which so far this year 71 people have died in Northern Ireland alone as a direct result of the security situation. They were mostly civilians, but the total included 11 members of the Royal Ulster Constabulary and 15 members of the armed forces, including eight from the Ulster Defence Regiment.

All of us are all too familiar with the litany of suffering caused by terrorists seeking to promote their political objectives by violence and the threat of violence—violence all the more atrocious because it is so completely futile. Each of us also, as we take part in the debate, will recollect particular incidents which have made an especially deep impression on us personally and which must inevitably influence our approach to the issues that we are debating.

Since that is so, I do not need to spend time explaining why the Government will not rest until Northern Ireland is cleansed of the abomination of terrorism. I do not need to justify to the House why the Government seek to maintain the rule of law, or why we have a duty to ensure that all the people of Northern Ireland must be free to express their political opinions without inhibition, fear of discrimination or reprisal, or why we have a duty to defend the democratically expressed wishes of the people of Northern Ireland against those who try to promote political objectives, including a change in the status of Northern Ireland, by terror.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Like all my right hon. and hon. Friends, I have always strenuously opposed terrorism and condemned the IRA and its sister organisation on the opposite side of the sectarian divide. There is no justification for terrorism. I oppose the campaign of terrorism that has been going on for 20 years. Ireland is no more united now than it was on the day in 1970 when the IRA started its bombing activities. However, is not it essential that, while those who are found guilty by the courts of such crimes should be imprisoned, those who are found guilty but are seen to be innocent should be released? Therefore, would not it be acting in the interests of the rule of law that, if the Birmingham Six are not guilty—hardly anyone believes that they are—they should be released as soon as possible? That would improve relations between Ireland and this country.

Mr. Brooke: The hon. Gentleman's intervention was more like a speech. Even if he had made that point in a speech later in the proceedings, it could well have been out of order in the context of this Bill.

Nor do I need to persuade the House of the need to ensure that the police, supported so long as is necessary by the armed forces, have the resources that they require to undertake their difficult and dangerous work on behalf of the whole community, or why we need to provide in Northern Ireland a legal framework within which the security forces can act to defeat terrorism. Nevertheless, simply because the crimes committed by terrorists are so heinous, because they are such an affront to human decency and to the civilised values that we share with our friends throughout the world, and because these terrible deeds move us to great and justified anger, I should like to make clear to the House the Government's strategy to defeat terrorism and to explain how the Bill is an integral part of that strategy.

Indeed, it is because I regard it as essential that the House and the wider public should be in no doubt what our policies are for eradicating the scourge of terrorism that, as right hon. and hon. Members will recall, I issued a statement to coincide with the introduction of the Bill setting out the general principles that inform the Government's security policy in Northern Ireland.

The House will forgive me, Mr. Speaker, if I do not go through that document in detail now, although I commend it to right hon. and hon. Members for further study. I would draw your attention, Mr. Speaker, to one sentence in that statement, for it is perhaps the most important of all:

"the Government is determined that terrorism will be defeated through the even-handed and energetic enforcement of the criminal law".

There is something so fundamental here that I believe that I should explain why the Government are in no doubt that our response to terrorism must be conducted within the framework of the rule of law. It is, quite simply, because our adherence to the rule of law, in the face of the most atrocious provocation, as well as to democratic procedures and the principles of justice that sustain our civilisation, demonstrates why terrorism should not win and why it cannot win. For terrorism, by its very nature, represents a relapse into barbarism and savagery that unites the entire civilised world in determined and unquenchable opposition.

For these reasons, too, we believe that, so far as possible, our response to the terrorist threat should be based on the ordinary criminal law of Northern Ireland. This means that the courts and security forces are constrained by the law. Suspects will be treated as innocent until proved guilty; they will be prosecuted on the basis of proper evidence adduced in open court and tested to proper standards; and witnesses for and against the accused will be produced for open examination. In short, those accused of involvement in terrorist activities will be accorded essentially the same treatment, both in terms of prosecution and defence, as other persons suspected of ordinary crimes. They are tried and, if found guilty, punished for those crimes in a way that ensures that justice is both done and seen to be done. This reflects the deep truth that terrorist methods, whatever their purported objectives, are simply criminal—and should be tried as such.

Nevertheless, successive Governments have recognised that some modifications to the ordinary law are needed to deal with the terrorist emergency in Northern Ireland. This will hardly surprise right hon. and hon. Members, since it is one of the terrorists' main objectives to bring this about, as part of their campaign to undermine the basic institutions of the state and to provoke the authorities to measures that will be judged oppressive and cause us to lose the confidence and support of the community at large. That is why Governments have sought consistently to limit these departures from the normal criminal law, both in extent and in time, and to ensure that such exceptional measures as are needed are strictly proportionate to the terrorist threat.

At the same time, we need to ensure that the police, and the armed forces in their support, as well as the institutions of government generally, and the legal system in particular, are equipped under the rule of law to respond effectively to the terrorist threat—to have the power, so far as possible, to deter and interdict terrorist operations, to reassure the population, and, above all, to enable the police to bring the successful prosecution of terrorist criminals before the courts.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): The right hon. Gentleman speaks with such sublime confidence that everyone who is found guilty of terrorism is guilty that I find his speech extremely worrying. In Northern Ireland, there are the Diplock courts, with their lack of juries and many other things of that nature, and in this country we now realise that many who are innocent have been found guilty of various offences and have been in gaol for 15 or 16 years. Does not the right hon. Gentleman worry about this to some extent? What is happening in Northern Ireland is possibly even worse than what is happening in this country.

Mr. Brooke: The hon. Gentleman takes up a matter which was introduced by the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) and which does not relate specifically to the Bill. The hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) has drawn attention to the workings of the Diplock courts and, if I understood him rightly, he cast aspersions. I wish to reject those aspersions from the Government Dispatch Box.

Mr. Winnick: I apologise to the right hon. Gentleman for intervening a second time. Does not he see the relevance—*[Interruption.]* I wish that the hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens) would stop mumbling. He has not spoken about these matters previously.

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): The hon. Gentleman does not give anyone a chance to speak.

Mr. Winnick: Does not the right hon. Gentleman agree that it is extremely important that there should be full faith in the rule of law in this country and that the Dublin Government, as well as the Governments of other countries, including the United States of America, should understand that if a miscarriage of justice occurs, as with the Guildford Four and almost certainly with the Birmingham Six, it will be put right within our democratic system? Is not this relevant to trying to persuade people from abroad that the campaign against terrorism is one which we take extremely seriously and that if miscarriages of justice occur they will be put right at the first opportunity?

Mr. Brooke: I repeat what I have already said to the hon. Members for Hillsborough and for Walsall, North. In the hope of deflecting the hon. Member for Walsall, North and dissuading him from making a further intervention, I shall respond by saying that, while I and no doubt every other hon. Member regret any miscarriage of justice, we can take pride in the fact that the resolution of cases where there has been a reversal of previous judgments has been conducted within the normal process of the law and not as a result of any direct political intervention.

In practice, I hope that the House will readily understand that a permanent balance has to be struck between maintaining the ordinary procedures of the criminal law, along with effective procedures to guarantee individual rights and liberties, and such departures as are strictly necessary to enable us to confront and ultimately defeat the special character of the terrorist challenge.

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim North) *rose*——

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North) *rose*——

Mr. Brooke: I shall give way to the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley).

Rev. Ian Paisley: Should not it be emphasised by the Secretary of State that the Guildford Four and the Birmingham Six had jury trials? They were not found guilty under the Diplock court procedure. Will the right hon. Gentleman repudiate the assertion that has been made about Northern Ireland?

Mr. Brooke: I am most grateful to the hon. Gentleman for intervening and supporting me and confirming what I have already said to the hon. Member for Hillsborough. The hon. Member for Antrim, North is correct.

Although the Government do not rule out any workable and lawful measure——

Mr. Corbyn: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Brooke: I shall finish this sentence first.

Although the Government do not rule out any workable and lawful measure that may be necessary to defeat terrorism, we are convinced that if a lasting peace is to be achieved in Northern Ireland it will be secured in the long run only through sustained and vigorous application of the criminal law against all wrongdoers, from whichever side of the community they come.

Mr. Corbyn: Before the right hon. Gentleman leaves this subject, will he tell us what progress is being made in investigating violations of the law as it applies in Northern Ireland by the armed forces in the past and what investigations have been made into the shoot-to-kill policy that has been applied by the security forces in Northern Ireland? Does he agree that we all want to bring peace to Ireland and that to do so there must be a political strategy and a political dialogue? Can he give us any news on how that is developing?

Mr. Brooke: Seductive though Opposition Members may be, I have some idea of the length of the speech that I must deliver in support of the Bill on Second Reading. Perhaps a discussion on political developments should

[Mr. Brooke]

wait for another day. The hon. Gentleman asked a leading question. There is no shoot-to-kill policy in Northern Ireland, and there never has been one. As he well knows, all allegations about such episodes have been investigated.

Sir David Mitchell (Hampshire, North-West): Does my right hon. Friend agree that there is a shoot-to-kill policy in Northern Ireland, and that it is operated by the Provisional IRA? They are the only people who operate such a policy.

Mr. Brooke: I agree factually with my hon. Friend, but for the purposes of this debate I am defending the Government's policy. If I make some progress with the Bill, it may assist the House.

The essential purpose of the Bill is to re-enact, with amendments and additions, the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Acts 1978 and 1987, together with part VI of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989, following the report by Lord Colville earlier this year. The Bill would usefully bring together in one piece of legislation all the anti-terrorism provisions that apply uniquely to Northern Ireland.

I have explained that our strategy is to defeat terrorism by the resolute application of the rule of law. From that premise, it follows that our duty is to ensure that the law is effective for that purpose. As I explained when the Bill was introduced on 8 November, for the moment and for the foreseeable future that law must contain provisions that recognise the exceptional threat terrorism continues to pose. That is the purpose of emergency legislation. We must provide the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the armed forces, as well as the courts, with the legal means that they need to protect the community effectively and to defeat terrorism. At the same time, we must continue to provide appropriate safeguards for those accused or suspected of terrorism. I attach no lesser value to the latter than to the former. We must have both in our legislation and I believe that, taken as a whole, the Bill represents an appropriate response to both concerns.

Emergency legislation is, by its very nature, something out of the ordinary. Because of its exceptional character, it has to be kept under constant review. Parliament recognised that when it decided that the current emergency provisions Acts should have a fixed, five-year life, expiring in May 1992, and that the principal provisions should be subject to annual review in both Houses. Right hon. and hon. Members will note that identical procedures are recommended for the Bill before us, should it be enacted. I would add only that, when the need for a particular provision no longer existed, it would remain the policy of the Government to repeal it or allow it to lapse as a step towards greater reliance on the ordinary criminal law.

Mr. Corbyn: I thank the right hon. Gentleman for giving way a second time. He will recall that the European Court of Human Rights expressed grave reservations about the operation of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989. Is he satisfied that the Bill will meet the requirements of that court on holding prisoners without access to legal representatives?

Mr. Brooke: I should not bring this legislation before the House unless I had such confidence in it. If a case were to arise under the convention, it would take its course and the Government would defend their policy.

As I said, it would remain the Government's policy to repeal legislation or to allow it to lapse when the need for it no longer existed. That time, however, is not yet. For the reasons that I have already given, I wish that it were and, for those same reasons the House may be sure that the Government would not be bringing forward this Bill now were we not fully persuaded that its provisions were entirely necessary. Right hon. and hon. Members will have noted that Lord Colville concluded that the basic measures currently available to the police, the armed forces and the courts remain necessary. There will, of course, be an opportunity for right hon. and hon. Members to debate the merits of the various proposals in the Bill over the coming weeks. I simply make the point now that the ordinary criminal law and trial procedures are not in all respects adequate to deal with the special problems of terrorism as they now exist, so additional measures remain sadly necessary. That is not, of course, a phenomenon unique to terrorist crimes; it is recognised equally in the case of drugs and fraud, for example, for which special legislation exists. The Government therefore have no hesitation in bringing forward this Bill. It is central to our common fight against terrorism in Northern Ireland.

As I turn my attention now towards the detail of the Bill, I should like to express the gratitude of Her Majesty's Government to Lord Colville for what we regard as a thorough, incisive and constructive report. As the House will know, Lord Colville has now been reviewing the emergency provisions Acts for some years, as well as the Prevention of Terrorism Act 1989, and his expertise is apparent for all to see in his report. I commend him for his report, which was valuable to Government and, I am sure, will be valuable to the House generally in its deliberations. I should also like to thank all those others, including the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights and the Irish Government, who have given us the benefit of their advice.

As will by now be apparent to the House, the greater proportion of the Bill, in line with Lord Colville's recommendations, is a straight re-enactment of existing provisions. That should be clear to right hon. and hon. Members from the explanatory and financial memorandum. I therefore hope that the House will bear with me if I do not devote too much time to those sections of the Bill that would essentially re-enact the existing provisions. Naturally, I recognise that simply because a provision is being re-enacted does not mean that it does not merit debate. But as the existing provisions are very familiar to the House, I hope that right hon. and hon. Members would regard it as a better use of our time if I were to concentrate on the new provisions rather than those which are already established.

It may assist the House if I give a brief outline of the structure of the Bill, highlighting the new powers about which I will say more later. Part I of the Bill replaces, without significant amendment, part I of the 1978 Act. It continues the category of scheduled offences and makes provisions for trials on indictment for scheduled offences to be conducted by the court without a jury. It provides that bail in such cases can be granted only by the High Court or Court of Appeal and contains special rules on the admissibility of confessions by persons charged with

scheduled offences, and for reversing the onus of proof in relation to offences of possession of firearms and explosives. Part I also provides for the granting of remission for persons convicted of scheduled offences and for the reactivation of the remitted portion of earlier sentences. Those provisions are currently found in part VI of the prevention of terrorism Act 1989.

Part II of the Bill replaces, with amendments, part II of the 1978 Act. It confers powers on the police and armed forces to enter premises without warrant, to search for munitions, radio transmitters and receivers, and for persons unlawfully detained, and for the purpose of arresting terrorists. It provides the police and armed forces with powers of arrest and seizure; powers to stop and question, and to search persons in public places; and powers of entry and interference with rights of property and with roads. The power of seizure for the armed forces is provided for the first time. That part also creates a new offence of bypassing closed border crossing points and a new power to allow the police and armed forces to examine documents and other recorded data.

Part III replaces, with one significant addition, part III of the 1978 Act. It continues the category of proscribed organisations for Northern Irleand, and offences relating to membership of and support for such organisations. It also creates offences relating to the unlawful collection of information likely to be useful to terrorists; training in the making or use of firearms and explosives; and the wearing in public places of masks, hoods or other articles to conceal identity. This part also creates a new offence of possessing items intended for terrorist purposes.

Part IV, together with schedule 3, re-enacts the power of executive detention. Part V replaces, with amendments, part III of the 1987 Act, and makes provision for the regulation of security guard companies in Northern Ireland.

Part VI replaces, without amendment, part II of the 1987 Act. It contains statutory rights for persons arrested and detained under the terrorism provisions in police custody to have a person informed of their arrest and whereabouts, and to have access to legal advice. It also makes new provision to allow the police to take fingerprints without consent from terrorist suspects, in line with the law in Great Britain.

Part VII replaces, without amendment, existing provisions in the 1978 Act and the prevention of terrorism Act 1989. It provides for the Secretary of State to make regulations for promoting the preservation of the peace and the maintenance of order. It re-enacts the provision that widened the grounds on which the Secretary of State may reject applications for licenses for new explosives factories and magazines, currently found in part IV of the prevention of terrorism Act 1989. It provides for the payment of compensation by the Secretary of State in respect of property taken, occupied, destroyed or damaged by members of the security forces. This part also contains a new power to enable the Secretary of State to make codes of practice governing the exercise of the emergency powers by the police and armed forces. Part VIII contains supplementary provisions.

That, is a brief outline of the contents of the Bill. Generally speaking, and with certain exceptions that I will come to in a moment, the re-enactment of the various provisions, either with or without amendment, is in line with Lord Colville's recommendations.

I should now like to spend a few moments examining some of the new or otherwise prominent provisions of the Bill. I propose, therefore, to deal in turn with executive detention, the proposed new offence of possession of items intended for terrorist purposes, the proposed new power to examine documents and the proposed new powers in relation to border crossing points.

I suspect that the first thing that may have struck many right hon. and hon. Members when they first read the Bill was that the provisions relating to executive detention have been retained. Here we have not accepted Lord Colville's recommendation. I make no apology for this. The Government are determined to keep available a comprehensive range of responses to terrorist violence in the Province. Although the precise circumstances in which detention would be reintroduced are not at present identifiable, and while there are no current plans to do so, the Government continue to believe that the outright repeal of the provisions would be mistaken, especially as, should the introduction of internment ever be needed, it may well be needed quickly, which would not be possible without the necessary powers on the statute book. Also, it may be of interest to right hon. and hon. Members to be reminded that the Republic of Ireland has an analogous power of internment available to it.

I shall now turn to some of the new provisions in the Bill.

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): I have never voted against the emergency provisions legislation, on the grounds that I operated it and that I have no right to change my mind when I am in opposition. However, I am of a mind to vote against the Bill tonight because of the issue that the Secretary of State has just passed over—executive detention—which has not been used since February 1975 and was ended at the end of 1975. There must be a better justification for including this important issue in legislation if it is not being used. If the Government wanted to use it, they should come back to the House of Commons and justify it because, as Gardiner showed, the legislation I inherited was not good—it sullied the law and had an effect abroad. Surely there must be a better justification than merely saying, "One might need it." One could not possibly introduce detention on the same principle as before.

Mr. Brooke: I am familiar with the arguments for and against executive detention, with which the right hon. Gentleman will also be familiar, and to which he has in part alluded. The fact remains that, if one wished to deploy those powers, it would need to be done promptly and in such a way that terrorists had no warning that one was proposing to do it. The powers on the statute book require the Government—by the procedure of order—to justify what they have done after the event. If one had to go through parliamentary procedure before engaging in executive detention, the purpose of that detention would be lost. As I said a moment ago, the circumstances under which it might be used are remote. The Government's view is that it should be retained on the statute book.

In chapter 2 of his report, Lord Colville examined difficulties confronting the police and armed forces in Northern Ireland and considered the case for additional powers to—and I quote his report—

"assist them to counter the changing and more sophisticated methods of operation now adopted by terrorists".

[Mr. Brooke]

One such difficulty referred to by Lord Colville is that the terrorists are increasingly using and adapting for use as components in their improvised weapons and bombs a range of everyday articles which have otherwise innocent, lawful purposes. He says that it was put to him that

"there are now various articles which, though harmless in themselves, are so closely associated with terrorist activities that possession of them, in circumstances giving rise to reasonable suspicion of connection with terrorism, should be a new offence: the onus of disproving the suspicious circumstances should lie on the possessor".

He illustrates the argument by referring to adhesive tape, plastic drums, bell-pushes, coffee grinders, kitchen scales and nylon fishing line which, though innocent items in themselves, can, he quotes

"also have very sinister applications".

Lord Colville therefore recommends that, to remedy the current deficiency whereby persons caught in possession of items of use to terrorists, in suspicious circumstances, can evade prosecution, a new offence should be created of

"going equipped for acts of terrorism".

The Government have accepted that recommendation in principle and acted upon it. The Bill therefore contains a new offence of possession of items intended for terrorist purposes, in clause 29, modelled on Lord Colville's proposal. We believe that this will assist in the bringing of prosecutions against those who are responsible for acquiring, storing and using the equipment on which the terrorist campaign depends, as well as those who are intent on using it themselves.

In chapter 2, Lord Colville also examined the difficulty confronting the police and armed forces over the examination of documents. He explained, in paragraph 2.6(d), that

"messages, information about targets and other useful material may have to be reduced to writing on inconspicuous pieces of paper or innocent-looking documents, as being the only safe means of communication."

There is thus a clear mischief to be remedied. There have been many examples in recent times of terrorists storing information in writing or other forms. Lord Colville's solution to this problem was to recommend that we should wait and see how the existing law, in the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, develops. He made no recommendation for a new power. However, the Government regard this as such a damaging omission that it would be unsafe to leave it uncorrected. As the law now stands, the advantage lies very much in the terrorists' favour and the Government have decided that action was necessary, both to make the terrorists' life more difficult and to increase the police's and armed forces' chances of obtaining hard evidence.

Right hon. and hon. Members will notice that the new power, which is found in clause 22, is tied explicitly to clause 30, the offence of collecting information useful to terrorists. As the law stands at present, it is an offence, under section 22 of the 1978 Act, which clause 30 replaces, to collect information about members of the judiciary, the police, the armed forces and the prison service and others, which would be useful to terrorists, yet there are no powers for the security forces to look explicitly for such information. The new provision is intended to remedy that anomaly. However, the Bill is drafted in such a way that searches under the new power would be limited to the extent reasonably required for ascertaining whether information likely to be useful to terrorists was present. In the Government's view, neither this new power nor the new offence of possession will be applied in such a way that any law-abiding member of the public would have any reason to fear. The decision to prosecute in the case of the new offence would rest with the independent Director of Public Prosecutions in Northern Ireland; the exercise of the new power of examination would be determined by joint operational directives to be issued by the Chief Constable and the GOC.

In chapter 13 of his report, Lord Colville drew attention to the problem of the illegal reopening or bypassing of closed border crossing points. As right hon. and hon. Members know, there has been a concerted campaign to reopen or bypass crossing points over the past 18 months. The Government recognise that the closure of border crossing points can cause inconvenience to local communities, but I assure the House that these crossing closures are vital in the interests of security. To quote Lord Colville,

"not only are the security forces extremely sensitive to the dangers from such illegal vehicular access, but their apprehensions are shared by many of the civilian population in border areas".

The illegal reopening or bypassing of closed border crossings can therefore present the most serious risk in security terms because they can allow terrorists to move weapons or explosives across the border or to mount attacks. Given these dangers, it is imperative that certain crossing points remain closed. The Government have therefore inserted a new offence in the Bill, relating to the bypassing of closed border crossings. This will reinforce the offence in the existing legislation of interfering with closed crossing points. We have also created a new power to enable members of the armed forces to seize equipment used in the illegal reopening or bypassing of such crossings. Such a power is already available to the police, but, such is the nature of patrolling in border areas, they are not always present. Hence the need to close a loophole from which only terrorists and their fellow travellers benefit.

I turn now to the subject of codes of practice. As right hon. and hon. Members will know, the Government published in July a non-statutory guide to the exercise by the police and armed forces of certain powers under the emergency legislation in Northern Ireland. We are currently monitoring the effectiveness of that guide. Representations were made to Lord Colville, as they have been in the past, that an alternative approach would be to have statutory codes of practice and Lord Colville recommends that we take an enabling power in case the guide proves inadequate. The Government accept his recommendation and such powers are therefore to be found in clauses 48 and 49.

There are also a few other matters arising out of Lord Colville's report on which I should like to comment. As right hon. and hon. Members will be aware, another of Lord Colville's recommendations was that interviews with terrorist suspects should be recorded, without sound, on video and that consideration should be given to trials in tape recording such interviews, in parallel with the current trials in Great Britain. The House will want to know that the Government have considered these proposals very carefully. We acknowledge that there remains concern about police interview procedures with terrorist suspects and recognise that the introduction of sound or video

recording could have a beneficial effect on confidence in those procedures, as well as allowing allegations of ill-treatment to be controverted.

Nevertheless, we have concluded, after the most careful consideration, that it would be wrong to proceed with Lord Colville's recommendations, although I would remind the House that, if we ever reach a different view, the change could be made without legislation—under the terms, for instance, of the kind of code of practice to which I have just referred. The Government believe that the introduction of video recording could seriously jeopardise the usefulness of the interview process, which remains crucial to the police in their efforts to deal with terrorism effectively. Nor do we believe that video recording would, in itself, remove completely the scope for allegations to be made.

Mr. Seamus Mallon (Newry and Armagh): Is the Secretary of State suggesting that interviews that take place in police stations as a result of detention under the emergency legislation are a substantial means of obtaining information in Northern Ireland? I thought that one of the elements that we had to protect in Northern Ireland was that the emergency provisions should be implemented only where there was accurate suspicion about a person's involvement and that one should not trawl for information. That must be made very clear to the Secretary of State.

Mr. Brooke: The hon. Gentleman is of course justified in intervening on a matter which I understand causes him concern. However, the Government have made up their mind on an issue on which the Bennett commission of inquiry into interrogation procedures in Northern Ireland passed a view a decade ago. We closely examined whether there had been any changes in the pattern both of activity and policy during the intervening decade. The Bennett commission recommended that video recordings should not be introduced. We decided, on the basis of what had occurred during the intervening decade, that at this stage we would not be justified in changing the law, although, as I said a few moments ago, we should not need the Bill in order to do that.

As for audio-taping, we do not believe that the time is right to conduct trials in connection with terrorist suspects in Northern Ireland. The police in Northern Ireland have little experience with tape recording, even in ordinary cases, at present, but we shall obviously study carefully the results of the trials involving terrorist suspects currently under way in Great Britain.

There is also the question of ensuring effective complaints mechanisms to which, like the Chief Constable and the General Officer Commanding, I attach the highest importance. As I explained in my statement on security policy, the public have a right to expect the highest standards of behaviour from police officers and members of Her Majesty's forces. Activity or actions falling short of those standards will never be condoned. Indeed, the Government believe that anyone who has a genuine cause for complaint about the conduct of a police officer or a member of the armed forces should use the procedures that exist for the investigation of such complaints. It is against that background that we are paying special attention to what Lord Colville has to say on this subject in chapter 5 of his report and we shall return to this subject as the Bill progresses.

Effective action to curtail and disrupt the financing of terrorism is a vital element in the Government's strategy for defeating terrorism. Accordingly, the law in this area was substantially strengthened by the enactment last year of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act. That Act created three new offences in connection with the handling of funds intended for terrorist use. First, it relieved banks and other financial institutions of their obligations to confidentiality where a terrorist connection was suspected. Second, it gave new powers to the police, acting with the express authority of a court or, in Northern Ireland only and exceptionally, of the Secretary of State, to search premises and examine records, including financial records in appropriate cases. Third, it provided new powers of restraint and confiscation for the courts in connection with the new offences.

These new powers have already proved valuable, particularly in relation to investigation. However, as Lord Colville indicated in his report, there may be scope for further tightening of the law in this area and, while I would not wish to speculate further at this stage, the Government have not ruled out the possibility of further changes.

Mr. Corbyn: Many people are concerned about the operation of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act. Does the Secretary of State think it right that those who have been before the courts in this country, originally arrested under that Act and subsequently released by the court because no case was found against them, should be made the subject of a banishment order signed by the Secretary of State to prevent them from returning to England, Wales or Scotland? Does the Secretary of State think that that is a due process of law which ought to be on the statute book of this country?

Mr. Brooke: The decision that my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary would take in those circumstances would be based on the facts of those cases. I am aware that there have been such cases. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman would not hesitate to raise them as and when they occurred. However, I do not regard the process as inappropriate in terms of the activities against which the legislation is directed.

Finally, the House will wish to know that I intend, shortly, to bring forward a proposal for a draft Order in Council to give effect to certain of Lord Colville's recommendations that would more appropriately be dealt with by that form of legislation than by this Bill, since their effects are not confined to the emergency law. These are the recommendations in paragraph 7.3. about remands into police custody and paragraph 16.4. on the copying of documentary exhibits. My intention is that this order should be made at about the time that the Bill will receive Royal Assent.

I have given a lengthy explanation of the general background to and the detail of the Bill. I hope that that has been helpful to the House. I simply conclude by reaffirming the Government's determination that the people of Northern Ireland should be protected from terrorism. Her Majesty's Government will continue to take whatever measures are necessary, within the framework of law, to purge terrorism from Northern Ireland and we regard this Bill as making a vital contribution to the achievement of that goal. It is, naturally, not the only weapon in our armoury against terrorism: we shall, for example, continue to co-operate

[Mr. Brooke]

closely on security with the Government of the Republic of Ireland and our other friends abroad. We shall also continue to implement effective measures in the political, social and economic fields, which are designed to promote equality of treatment, economic prosperity and stable democratic institutions—measures which are both good in themselves—but which will also complement and reinforce the work of the security forces, about which the hon. Member for Islington, North asked me earlier.

Rev. Ian Paisley: Will the right hon. Gentleman inform the House whether, in keeping with what he says about co-operating closely on security with the Government of the Republic of Ireland, he had full discussions with Mr. Collins on this Bill? Mr. Collins has savagely attacked him and repudiated him.

Mr. Brooke: I do not detect in the hon. Gentleman's question the total constructiveness and support which I usually associate with his interventions. I detected an element of mischief in that inquiry. I should be the first to acknowledge that the Minister for Foreign Affairs and I had a purposeful conversation about the legislation and that we did not necessarily see eye to eye on every point.

The Bill is nevertheless a most important part of that armoury, for we believe that it represents a fair and proportionate response to the current terrorist threat and that it will provide the courts and the security forces with the legal resources that they need to combat terrorism effectively, while still providing reasonable safeguards to protect the rights of individuals who fall under suspicion. It is, above all, a Bill which should be welcomed in principle both by the House and men and women of good will in Northern Ireland and elsewhere who share our determination to write an end to the chapter of terrorism in the history of Northern Ireland.

Finally, I should like to pay tribute to two groups who should be in our thoughts during this debate: first, the men and women of the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the armed forces in Northern Ireland. They remain the first line of defence for the whole community against the terrorist threat and I pay an unreserved tribute to their continuing courage, dedication and professionalism. They have shown a resolve to tackle terrorism from whichever section of the community it comes and they have demonstrated by their actions in upholding the law that they are worthy of the full support of all sections of the community in the Province. A similar tribute is deserved for the judiciary, court staff and members of the prison service.

Secondly I pay tribute to the ordinary people of Northern Ireland, who continue to demonstrate a remarkable and outstanding resilience in the face of the most extreme provocation. I should like to leave them with this message: the Government treat with the utmost seriousness their duty to defend all the people of Northern Ireland, Protestant and Catholic, Unionist and Nationalist, against those who try to promote their political objectives, including a change in the status of Northern Ireland, by violence or the threat of violence. We shall continue our efforts, taking whatever measures are necessary within the law, for however long it takes, until terrorism is eradicated in Northern Ireland. Terrorist violence serves only to strengthen our resolve.

Mr. Terry Dicks (Hayes and Harlington): Will my right hon. Friend assure me that he will take every action possible to stop the obscene funerals of IRA terrorists being shown on television and being allowed to take place in the Province?

Mr. Brooke: I give my hon. Friend the assurance that what occurs within the law should be discharged within the law.

Terrorist violence serves only to strengthen our resolve. That message will bear repetition until it has been driven home. The Government are determined that the terrorists will never win. The Bill and the new provisions that it contains are designed to make our task easier.

4.20 pm

Mr. Kevin McNamara (Kingston upon Hull, North): I beg to move, to leave out from "That" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

That this House, whilst asserting the need to maintain confidence in the rule of law and in the administration of justice as the fundamental basis for achieving a just and stable society in Northern Ireland, declines to give a Second Reading to a Bill which fails to implement the main recommendations of Lord Colville's review of the cufrent legislation by refusing to remove internment without trial from the Statute Book and failing to introduce the video-taping of interviews with terrorist suspects; to introduce the 'certifying in' of scheduled offences; to establish an ombudsman to consider the operation of complaints against the security forces and a statutory duty for the Commission of Human Rights to supervise the operation of the statute; and to consolidate and reform the law relating to the examination of witnesses at Coroners Courts, the use of public interest immunity certificates, and the abolition of the right of silence.

The Secretary of State has already pencilled in for us the difficult background of atrocities, deaths, woundings, maimings, killings and explosions that take place in Northern Ireland. It is always a difficult time and, therefore, always a difficult task to move from the proper emotions that those dreadful atrocities raise within us to an objective examination of the proposed legislation. The Bill before the House reminds us of the extent to which civil liberties and individual freedoms have suffered in the past 10 years as a result of terrorist atrocities.

At the end of his speech the Secretary of State paid a proper tribute to the security forces, the judiciary and the ordinary people of Northern Ireland who have suffered tremendous aggravation from men of violence from all parts of the community. I join him in that tribute. The people who seek to uphold the rule of law in Northern Ireland have a difficult task to carry out. They have been subject to many attacks on them, whether they are ordinary squaddies, members of the Royal Ulster Constabulary or members of the judiciary or prison service. We are indebted to them for their tremendous dedication to their job in past years.

The Labour party does not dispute the need in principle for emergency legislation dealing with the problems in Northern Ireland. It is obvious that the IRA and other similar groups take part in the most direct infringement of human rights in the Province, particularly of the basic human right to live. Therefore, the House must agree that the murderous assaults of the paramilitary must never be allowed to win the day.

However, the Bill is not about the iniquities of the terrorists, on which we all agree, but about the correctness of the Government's responses to them. That is where we are in profound disagreement with some of the proposals.

Our opposition is one of principle. We believe that terrorism is best met by a firm application of the rule of law. That is what distinguishes the forces of the state from those of violent subversives and the men of violence. Far from weakening the Army and police in Northern Ireland, the need to work within the rule of law is a valuable reminder of their and, therefore, our moral superiority. The IRA would like nothing better than for the security forces to descend to its level and squabble in some sort of lawless gutter. The moment that such a thing happened would be the moment when the IRA and other men of violence had their victory.

The security forces must stay above that fray. They must not slum it in the criminal underworld below. The rule of law is their most important weapon in the fight against terrorism. It is the security forces' rationale. It is the ultimate guarantee that fairness and justice will eventually triumph within the Province. It is not enough, however, merely to invoke the phrase, "the rule of law". We need to ask what those words mean, as few formulas can have become so weakened by unreflective over-use in recent times. The Government constantly repeat their determination to maintain the rule of law, but they rarely explain the principles that underpin that commitment. That is entirely understandable, because discussion of those principles serves only to expose the degree to which the Government have, regrettably, drifted away from them in past years.

The rule of law involves first and foremost the simple notion that we are all—Ministers, the police, the Army, the UDR, the SAS, hon. Members, as well as ordinary citizens—bound by that same law. There should be no special rules for, or treatment of, any class of or groups of persons, no matter how eminent. Of equal fundamental importance is the idea that the law should be certain. It should not leave too much to the discretion of law enforcement officers. It should not be changed simply because parts of it prove inconvenient or aggravating to the authorities. The rule of law is a package of rights, not a menu of options. It is not for the Government to obey only those bits that are palatable and to dispense with the rest.

There may be occasions when it is necessary to depart from the normal circumstances that are associated with the idea of the rule of law. That is always the dilemma of democracy and that is what we are discussing today.

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): Is not the hon. Gentleman talking nonsense? Is not the law what a democratically elected Parliament decides? Therefore, what is proposed here would be the rule of law. What the hon. Gentleman is talking about is human rights. If he is considering whether there should be any diminution of human rights for those who perpetrate, or are suspected of perpetrating, terrorist acts, he is talking about something entirely different from the rule of law.

Mr. McNamara: With the greatest respect to the hon. and learned Gentleman, he may use his definition of the rule of law and I shall use mine—one that the ordinary citizen understands as being the rule of law.

Mr. Mallon: The hon. Gentleman and I are laymen. Would he expect the law to be based upon the highest evaluation of human rights? Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the law should reflect such an evaluation?

Mr. McNamara: I agree with my hon. Friend and that is why any diminution of those rights must be carefully examined and fully justified. It is not for the Government to obey only those bits of the law that they find palatable and to dispense with the rest.

There may be occasions when it is necessary for the Government to depart from the normal standards that are associated with the rule of law. As I said, that is what we are discussing today—it is our dilemma and a dilemma for democracy. The need for emergency provisions legislation—a fact which we do not dispute—demonstrates that that is the case. Such changes, however, must be few and definite. They must be those that are judged absolutely necessary and must be strictly proportionate to the harm that they are intended to counter. They must be temporary, so that the need for their continuance is regularly assessed. They must be kept constantly under review, so that their exceptional nature is never forgotten. There is not, and never should be, any such thing as an every-day emergency, just as there never should be any such thing as an acceptable level of violence. Special powers should be dispensed with, despite continuing violence, if it is judged that the level of disorder no longer warrants their continued existence. A need in 1978 is not necessarily a need in 1990.

The IRA is still killing and maiming, but it must not be allowed to determine our agenda of what should or should not be in the law. By its actions it should not be allowed to have any veto on modifications to our emergency laws. If there is one word that encapsulates the idea behind the rule of law it is fairness. In a divided community, fairness is the key element in making the legal system function.

If the law is even handed and is seen to be such, it can have a vital role in fostering reconciliation between the communities in the Province. If the law is seen to be equal in its treatment of all, it will be much easier to wean communities away from the violent subversives that some of them presently support. Conversely, if the law is perceived as unequal and partisan, or it is believed that it protects some and punishes others, it will be disregarded and treated as just another alienating emblem emanating from the other side. Therefore, the rule of law should not only give us the standards that make us different from the terrorists, but provide us with a way of demonstrating, our good will and commitment to fair play in the communities where this message needs to be heard most clearly.

As a result of our commitment to a real rule of law, we are compelled to oppose parts of the Bill. We have three main concerns. First, the Bill retains practically all the existing emergency powers contained in the previous Acts, but fails to consolidate all the other emergency law in the Province. Almost all the reforms suggested by Lord Colville in his most recent review have been unequivocally rejected. Secondly, the Bill proposes new laws which are extraordinarily broad and potentially very repressive. Thirdly, many of the crucial erosions in civil liberties that have occurred in recent years do not appear in the Bill. They lurk unnoticed and neglected in other legal nooks and crannies, despite the relevance to the issues with which the Bill affects to be concerned.

In short, the Bill is in many respects repressive by reflex action. It consolidates only those laws that it suits the Government to consolidate, and adds unnecessarily to the plethora of restrictions that already inhibit freedom in the Province. If there is an advocate of liberty somewhere within the Government, his or her voice can hardly have

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been heard. Certainly the Government did not heed Lord Colville when the broad outlines of the legislation were being sketched.

Our first concern is the complete rejection of practically all Lord Colville's positive recommendations. Nowhere is that more evident than in the Government's total lack of liberal instincts in relation to the problem of internment without trial—or, as it is now called, "executive detention". Lord Colville called for an end to that power, but the Bill preserves it. Moreover, it allows for its introduction without further reference to the House or Parliament. We are assured by the Secretary of State that internment is not currently on the agenda. The memory of the catastrophe of 1971 is still fresh enough in people's minds—and, within it, the making of the Provisional IRA. There is no guarantee, however, that the temptation of the quick but disastrous internment fix will not be yielded to in the future. After a year of peaceful revolution in eastern Europe, and at a time when Britain is rightly critical of detention without trial in other places—Israel's in the occupied territories, for instance—it is ridiculous that this power should remain on the statute book.

The preservation of internment powers is enough in itself to justify the rejection of the Bill. However, Lord Colville's recommendations have been disregarded in many other respects. He recommended that police interviews with terrorist suspects should be video-recorded so that allegations of brutality could be more easily controverted and public confidence in the police could thereby be improved. The cameras are already in place, but no provision for such a recommendation appears in the Bill. It was with sadness that I listened to the Secretary of State's attempt to justify its omission.

Not only has the High Court recently awarded substantial compensation for injuries received in just such an interrogation in Castlereagh, but a member of the bench in Northern Ireland has added his voice to those calling for this elementary reform. It would be possible to introduce it, and to preserve secrecy and protection for those carrying out the interrogation, while ensuring people's basic safety, so that they will not be roughed up while they are being interrogated. To suggest that there might be the odd little corridor where someone could be roughed up, and to use that as an excuse for not having a video camera in the room where the interrogation is taking place, is an argument for having cameras in the corridors, not an argument for doing away with the idea of videoing.

Mr. Flannery: Can my hon. Friend think why the Government struggle so strenuously against what to most of us seems such an obvious move? Given the terrible circumstances that we have been living through for so many years, that is almost unbelievable. Has my hon. Friend any idea why the Government are resisting the idea?

Mr. McNamara: I have no idea, because it is now possible, with all the scientific techniques and technological developments, to distort a face on a television screen if one is worried about the security of the interrogating officer. Therefore, it is possible for such matters to be overcome.

Mr. Mallon: With reference to the question of the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery), the figures in relation to detentions under both the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1978—the EPA—and the Prevention of Terrorism Act 1974—the PTA—show, as a former Minister confirmed in Committee when we were dealing with other legislation—and it is on record in *Hansard*—that legislation allows detention to be used to trawl for information. If there were a video record, with tape, of every interview that would become patently apparent. That is one of the reasons why I believe, as does the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara), that the Secretary of State was slightly embarrassed when he dealt with the matter earlier. Can he say anything to dispel that belief?

Mr. McNamara: I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon), but there is some confusion. Lord Colville recommended videoing, but without a tape recording of what was taking place, so the evidence of trawling for information would not have become evident. I do not want to delay the House on a great deal of detail this afternoon but, in Committee, we could also explore the issue of taping. I believe that we can use both video and tape recordings and should properly introduce safeguards to protect the security forces, but that is something to be discussed in Committee.

Lord Colville thought that it would be a good idea to have a system of lay visitors to police stations or appoint an ombudsman-style figure to oversee the complaints procedure of both the Army and the police.

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): The hon. Gentleman said that some of those matters are for Committee—indeed, the whole of the hon. Gentleman's speech has been about Committee points. Does not he agree that it would be entirely appropriate for the Labour party to show that it is still in favour of emergency provisions for the peculiar, particular and unique difficulties in the Province and for there to be a bipartisan policy? I am willing, as I am sure the House is generally, for all the matters that the hon. Gentleman raises in relation to Lord Colville's points to be dealt with in Committee. If the Labour party does not show that it is in favour of such provisions it will be a sign to the Provisional IRA and other paramilitary organisations that there is no longer a bipartisan policy, which can only be the wrong signal.

Mr. McNamara: The hon. Gentleman obviously did not hear the start of my speech—I do not know whether he was asleep, not in the Chamber or indulging in mind wandering and not paying attention to what was being said. I specifically and directly said that the Labour party accepts the need for emergency legislation to deal with the particular problems in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Dicks: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. McNamara: With the greatest respect, I have given way a great deal and shall get on with my speech. The hon. Gentleman can make his speech later. The hon. Member for Wirral, South (Mr. Porter) said that I was making Committee points, which may be so, but they are of sufficient importance for the Secretary of State to feel it necessary to introduce them.

I was talking of the appointment of an ombudsman-style figure to look at complaints against the Army and the police. The Secretary of State said that he would deal with that point later in the Bill. It would be helpful to the House

if we could have some sign from his right hon. Friend the Minister in his winding-up speech about the thoughts of the Secretary of State and the Government on the matter.

Lord Colville also raised the possibility of an organisation such as the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights being required to keep emergency law under permanent review. The Bill makes no provision for that and Lord Colville's rejection goes even further. He made a number of recommendations geared towards returning to normality at some future date if the time were judged to be politically right. He suggested a new provision, to allow certifying-in to the Diplock no-jury courts rather than the present certifying-out procedure. The current system ensures that many cases end up before a single judge without a jury, even though they are suitable for jury trial. Lord Colville's proposal was aimed at redressing the imbalance. We believe that jury trials should be the norm, from which we should depart only in cases of clear necessity and we, therefore, support certifying-in. The Bill makes no provision for that.

In a similar vein, Lord Colville suggested a couple of alterations that would ease the change to three-judge Diplock courts if that policy were adopted in future. The Bill makes no provision for that. Lord Colville also recommended that provision be made so that, at some point, the law governing confession evidence admissibility in emergency cases could be replaced by the mainstream standards to be found in the Police and Criminal Evidence (Northern Ireland) Order. The Bill makes no such provision.

Lord Colville's suggestions are not revolutionary and they are clearly well intended. They do no more than to provide a set of goals towards which to work. They highlight the desire to return to normality that should characterise our attitude to all emergency legislation. Yet not one of Lord Colville's proposals appears in the Bill. The Government have rejected wholesale the idea that emergency law should contain the seeds of its own termination.

One could be forgiven for wondering why the Government asked Lord Colville to review their emergency provisions in the first place. Even many of his surely uncontroversial suggestions for a rationalisation of the law on arrest have not been accepted. Lord Colville must be wondering why he bothered to devote so much of his time to the task, although one cannot but join the Secretary of State in admiring his scholarship, hard work and attention to detail.

One of Lord Colville's suggestions has, however, found favour with the Government. Predictably, it is on a matter in respect of which Lord Colville favoured a tightening of the law. That is our second concern. Clause 29(1) provides:

"A person is guilty of an offence if he has any article in his possession in circumstances giving rise to a reasonable suspicion that the item is in his possession for a purpose connected with the commission, preparation or instigation of acts of terrorism connected with the affairs of Northern Ireland."

That goes wider than Lord Colville's proposal. It applies in, as well as outside, the home. The crime is the possession of something, no matter how innocent, that gives an official a "reasonable suspicion" of a terrorist involvement. No such terrorist involvement needs to be proved. The mere fact of the reasonable suspicion is enough to convict. In other words, the clause is designed to catch those against whom there is not, ordinarily speaking, sufficient evidence. As a result, a 10-year gaol sentence could be meted out to somebody for the crime of being suspected. That is Kafkaesque nonsense. It is a complete departure from the principles of certainty and fairness which ought to characterise the rule of law. In practice, the clause is a charter for official harassment. Its discretionary implementation will cause far more damage than it will prevent and the Opposition oppose it most strongly.

Finally, let me list the items that do not appear in the Bill, which is supposedly a consolidating measure, and so demonstrate the Government's deplorable selectivity in their approach to the rule of law. First, there is no provision to comply with the judgment of the European Court of Human Rights that seven days detention without charge constitutes a violation of human rights and fundamental freedoms. The Government continue to derogate from that decision. If any other litigant were involved, such conduct would be called by its proper name —contemptuous disobedience. That is what characterises the Government's attitude to the European Court of Human Rights.

Secondly, the Northern Ireland exclusion order power remains in force, despite pleas from successive authorities, including Lord Colville, for its repeal. Freedom of movement within the United Kingdom remains less protected than the same right in former communist countries of eastern Europe. We should all find that a source of shame were we not so inured to restrictive legislation.

Thirdly, no effort has been made to address the questions and concerns raised by deaths caused by the security forces when on duty in Northern Ireland—a point to which my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) referred. In recent years, such deaths have created controversy and have damaged confidence in the security forces. But there is no attempt to provide a mechanism that will allay public fears.

Fourthly, those who cause such deaths do not even have to appear at the coroner's inquest. The Northern Ireland Court of Appeal would have compelled such attendance but it was overruled earlier this year by the House of Lords. So, as often happens, a completely innocent civilian—such as my constituents' brother—can be killed by the police or the Army in Northern Ireland without the responsible officers ever having to account for their action in any court, whether at a criminal tribunal or a coroner's inquest. No apparent manipulation of the rule of law causes more offence than that—that the relatives of a person killed in Northern Ireland should not be able to ask of the person who pulled the trigger on behalf of the security forces where, why, how and when that death was justified. The opportunity should now be taken to overturn that decision by the House of Lords.

Fifthly, the law on immunity certificates should have been reformed, as such certificates further protect the security forces from the need to account for their actions to courts of law.

Sixthly, we deplore the absence of any provision to restore the right of silence. That ancient right, removed by order in 1988, should be restored forthwith. It appears that a boxer in this country can use the right to silence before a criminal court but an innocent person in Northern Ireland cannot.

The Bill shows that, to the Government, the rule of law has become little more than a piece of empty rhetoric to be applied when convenient but changed or disregarded when

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it causes the slightest embarrassment or difficulty. That is not only wrong in principle; it is short-sighted, as the abuse of the rule of law heightens alienation and, by fostering dissent, makes a solution to the problems of Northern Ireland less rather than more likely. If the Government are not prepared to accept our amendment, I shall recommend to my right hon. and hon. Friends that—much though we recognise the need for proper emergency legislation in Northern Ireland—we should oppose the Bill.

4.46 pm

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): As the Secretary of State was finishing his speech, I bowled him a ball and, clever cricketer that he is, he just blocked it. The House should be aware of the significance of that question and of the great significance of the answer given by the Secretary of State.

I am sure that the House will be surprised to know that I had great difficulty in obtaining a copy of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. The Vote Office has no copies and the Library possesses one that the staff almost made me sign for. Article 2(a) says:

"There is hereby established within the framework of the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Council set up after the meeting between the two heads of Government on 6 November 1981, an Intergovernmental Conference, (hereinafter referred to as 'the conference'), concerned with Northern Ireland and with relations between the two parts of the island of Ireland, to deal, as set out in this agreement, on a regular basis with . . . political matters; security and related matters; legal matters, including the administration of justice; and the promotion of cross-border co-operation."

The House will see that the Bill comes into the category of "legal matters, including the administration of justice."

The agreement continues:

"The United Kingdom Government accept that the Irish Government will put forward views and proposals on matters relating to Northern Ireland within the field of activity of the Conference, in so far as those matters are not the responsibility of the devolved administration of Northern Ireland. In the interest of promoting peace and stability, determined efforts shall be made through the conference to resolve any differences."

It is now evident that the agreement was not adhered to and, according to Mr. Collins, there was no such meeting of the Anglo-Irish Conference, no such discussion and certainly no effort to reach agreement. Mr. Collins says that he will raise the matter after the House has given the Bill its Second Reading. He will read it and make strong criticism, which will come as no surprise to Northern Ireland people.

I welcome what I might call the first obituary notice for the Anglo-Irish Agreement. I trust that we shall soon have discussions with the Secretary of State and with constitutional parties in Northern Ireland to see whether we can find a replacement for that agreement that will have a better chance of bringing about peace and stability and that ecumenical word that I do not like, reconciliation, in the Province. My idea of reconciliation is that both parts of Ireland should live in a neighbourly and peaceful manner and that people in Northern Ireland should do the same. People who have taken the ecumenical bandwagon want to put a theological slant on reconciliation. Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is by way of introduction to what I want to say about the Bill.

I am amazed by some hon. Members who say that they are dedicated to civil rights and human rights and will oppose the legislation. I am told that a letter from four Labour Members has appeared in *The Cork Examiner*. It calls upon the Government of the South of Ireland not to dare to extradite anybody wanted for crimes in England, Scotland and Wales because in such cases the courts in this part of the United Kingdom could not adjudicate fairly. How can those hon. Members tell the House that they are dedicated to civil rights and human rights and then tell the Government of the South that there is no chance of fair play and justice in our courts?

Mr. Dicks: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that six Labour Members recently sent a letter to *The Cork Examiner* telling the Irish Government that they should not take part in the process of extradition because those extradited to Great Britain and Northern Ireland would not get a fair trial? The Opposition spokesman says that he is in favour of fighting terrorism. That is two-faced nonsense.

Rev. Ian Paisley: I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman was not listening because one of his hon. Friends on the Front Bench had conspired to take his ear. I shall forgive the Front-Bench Member for doing that. I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for confirming that the letter was sent by six Labour Members and not four.

I believe in human rights and in civil and religious liberty for all men. As I have said about the Guildford Four, if it is found that in some way there was unfairness at a trial and that people should not have been sentenced, they should be released immediately and should receive adequate compensation. That is a principle. I do not agree with those who say when such things happen that the people were innocent. We do not know whether they are innocent. They were not proved to be guilty in a proper court of law, and under our law people are innocent until proved guilty. I have heard people say, "We know that they are absolutely innocent." I know people who have been released by the courts in Northern Ireland because something went wrong at their trial. Everybody knew that they were guilty and later they were proved to be guilty.

Mr. Barry Porter: Is not it the case that in proper courts of law some people were found guilty as a result of perjured evidence, which is a very different matter?

Rev. Ian Paisley: There were certainly times when a safe conviction could not be brought, and when that happens people should not be punished or imprisoned. That is my position. I have made it clear in public and I now do so in the House.

I do not think that many hon. Members know what we are up against in Northern Ireland. They do not realise the seriousness of the situation. I shall give one example. I have been a minister of religion for 44 years and in the city of Belfast I have always visited the Royal Victoria hospital where the major operations are carried out. A few months ago my church secretary had a heart attack and I went to visit him in the Royal. Hon. Members would have been surprised at the number of Army personnel who had to be provided to get me to that hospital, take me along the corridor and put me into the ward to let me speak to one of my church members and read the scriptures, pray with him and give him Christian consolation. I had hardly left the ward when two IRA men appeared there demanding to know whom Ian Paisley had visited. My church secretary

almost passed away because of that. That incident took place a few months ago. I was at the hospital on Saturday visiting another parishioner and the same thing happened.

The situation in the Province is not normal. We are talking about an emergency, but how long will it go on? We are dealing with a serious and difficult matter. We need laws which in a normal society we would not even think about and to which we would not give credence. Everybody in Northern Ireland has to sacrifice some of his civil liberties so that we may deal with those who would take from us the greatest liberty of all, the right to live.

In a democratic state in the 20th century no woman should be stopped at the door of a shop to have her handbag thoroughly examined. That is taking away her rights because a woman has a right to have a handbag and whatever is in it. However, such rights have to be sacrificed. If they were not, the terrorists, who are having a field day, would have an even bigger one because they could get their explosives into every shop in the Province. We must face the fact that we are dealing not with a simplistic situation but with a serious one.

Some hon. Members have the strange idea that if the constitutional parties get together and find some sort of agreement that is upheld by the House and by a vote in Northern Ireland, the IRA will go away. Anyone who believes that is a fool. If that came about, there would be even more serious violence in Northern Ireland because the rats caught in the trap would be prepared to take their violence to the very last ditch.

The House would do well to remember the history of the Irish Republic. There was a time when it was in a similar situation to that in Northern Ireland now, although that part of Irish history is conveniently forgotten. De Valera's irregulars were engaged in a killing campaign. It was Ireland's own civil war—not war against the Black and Tans nor against the security forces, but brother killing brother, father killing son and son killing father. It was anarchy.

The Irish Free State Government appointed a man called O'Higgins to be in charge of security in the Irish Republic. It would do hon. Members good to read his story. He knew more about Irish Republican violence than any hon. Member will ever know, for he was part of the original set-up. He knew that no amount of so-called democracy, parliamentary activity and conferences could get rid of that poison, so he took strong military action, even against his own friends. He even moved against a man who had at one time received a weapon from his own hands. Within four or five years there was peace, and De Valera had given up the irregulars and gone into politics. He eventually became Prime Minister and then President of the Irish Free State. What dealt with that Republican terrorism was not conferences or agreements but stern retribution for those who carried out acts of violence. The House needs to recognise that.

In the meantime, the people of Northern Ireland must suffer, and they are suffering. I shall agree with every extra law that is needed to strengthen the hand of those who want to deal with the perpetrators of violence and terrorism in the community. Alas, if the House thinks that by passing the Bill we shall defeat the IRA, the House should be disillusioned. I am sad, although it should be some solace to Labour Members, that the Secretary of State has said that the Bill does not represent any change in the Government's security policy. If there is no change in security policy, the people of Northern Ireland had better know that they will have a continuation of the bloodbath of the past 10 years. I say that with sorrow, but until there is a change in the security policy we shall make no progress.

I am not unduly concerned with what the Bill proposes. These matters will not, as has been suggested, take yet more rights from the people of Northern Ireland. After all, the Labour Government carried out many of the policies included in the Bill. This is part of an overall welding together of legislation. If it was proper to say, "Yes we need these things," when it was in power, how can the Labour party say, now that the situation has worsened, that it is not right now? There has been a spiral of killings in the years since the Anglo-Irish Agreement was signed. Violence is increasing, not decreasing, and it will be people in Northern Ireland who suffer, not Labour Members of Parliament.

The Guildford Four and the Birmingham Six were not tried under the provisions of this Bill. They were tried under the provisions of English legislation, before a jury. I have never agreed with the abolition of jury trials. When the emergency provisions Bill was introduced, I said in Committee that it was wrong, and voted against abolition of jury trials. The Government won by only one vote, a vote of a Roman Catholic. He told me that he was persuaded by Mr. Rawlinson, who was the then Attorney-General, that it would be unfair to Roman Catholics if jury trials were not abolished. The Government of the day should have no credit for getting that vote in that way.

We should be trying to get back to jury trials in Northern Ireland. I never accepted the argument that we could not have jury trials because members of the jury would be shot. If one can say that, one might as well say that one can never have a trial because all the witnesses will be shot, and they are more easily identifiable than the jury. However, I shall argue that case when the time comes, not now.

Do hon. Members think that all the miscarriages of justice have been against pro-Republicans? Could not one, two or even five others have suffered from a miscarriage of justice? I was amazed that, when some hon. Members asked for information about the UDR four, the police dragged their feet and were not prepared to say anything definite. I do not want to pre-empt any answer that will be given on Thursday at Question Time, but I get alarmed when such things happen.

Today, as we debate the Bill, we must tell the Government that their security policy, and that of successive Governments, whether Labour or Conservative, has not won the war against terrorism. Terrorists are stronger than ever. We are told that there are only about 300 active IRA members. I do not accept that, but if it is so, why are they not marked? Surely with 20,000 members of the security forces, we could deal with 300 IRA members. The Government have to deal with the IRA men in more covert operations. Those men have to realise that when they go out with a gun to kill and maim, the great deterrent is there. That is the only thing that will stop them, and on that the Government must change their policies.

It is better to have a dead terrorist than four murdered members of the security forces. The person with the gun in his hand who intends to do murder must be halted. It is a sad thing, but it is what the people of Northern Ireland are saying. If one takes away life, one forfeits one's own. It was

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a sad day when the clear commandment of God, that the Government have the power of the sword, was given up, and IRA lawlessness continues. A terrorist can kill one, two or even 50 people, but his life will not be forfeit.

I am an ex-prisoner. I was imprisoned by the O'Neill Government and I am proud of my record. I was in prison recently for protesting about the Anglo-Irish Agreement, and I noticed a tremendous change in prison conditions. It was an extremely nice cell. There was a beautiful radio and I had everything that I wanted. When I was imprisoned previously one had to be sentenced to three years' imprisonment before it was possible to have a radio. In those days we were not allowed to see television, but I found recently that prisoners could see television every night. There was an open canteen. I am all for prison reforms and decent conditions within prisons, but prison should be prison. If a prison ceases to be a prison, there is no deterrent. We must remember that that has happened in Northern Ireland and that there is no deterrent.

Mr. Flannery: The hon. Gentleman seems to complain bitterly that he was treated too leniently when he was in prison and seems to believe that he should have been treated more harshly. I have spoken many times in the House both before the hon. Gentleman has contributed to a debate and after he has spoken, and I have had the opportunity to weigh his arguments. He knows that I am passionately in favour of no one being killed if it is possible to ensure that killing does not take place. I am worried because it seems that the hon. Gentleman is coming close to advocating the law of the vigilante when he says, for example, "Everybody knew that he was guilty." Apparently, everyone knew that the Guildford Four were guilty. Lord Scarman is telling us that the Director of Public Prosecutions should get a move on in dealing with the Birmingham Six. We know that juries make mistakes in such cases. I have been told this afternoon that I have cast aspersions on the Diplock courts, but I regret that there is only one judge in a Diplock court. I am sorry also that there is no jury. The hon. Gentleman seems to be talking against the democratic process that he says that he is advocating when he uses expressions such as, "Everyone knew that he was guilty."

Rev. Ian Paisley: I do not intend to go down that road with the hon. Gentleman. As he said, we have crossed swords on many occasions. I shall merely say that after the stage to which I referred, the individual was proved guilty. Those who were present and witnessed the crime knew the guilt of the murderer. Northern Ireland is a small place. Nearly everyone is related to one another. It is dangerous to pass remarks about another because anyone who does that may find that he is the 32nd cousin of that person. Northern Ireland is not, obviously, England or London. It is a close-knit community. I see that even the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara), the Opposition Front-Bench spokesman, agrees with me about that.

In the case to which I referred, everyone new the facts, and eventually they emerged.

Mr. McNamara: My relatives have told me about the hon. Gentleman.

Rev. Ian Paisley: I trust that no McNamara blood flows in my veins, and I am sure that the hon. Gentleman would reciprocate. Thank God no Paisley blood flows in his veins. If it did, the hon. Gentleman might have some trouble with his Church. That is a story for another day.

There are people in Northern Ireland who will never have confidence in the police as long as the police have a crown above the harp. No matter what we do, no matter what legislation we introduce and no matter how fair the system is made, such people will not accept the Royal Ulster Constabulary. Its members may be the fairest of all people and they may deal with their responsibilities in the fairest possible way, but they will never be acceptable to some people. We cannot make everyone accept the RUC.

Let us take as an example the Foreign Minister of the South, Mr. Collins. He has conducted a deliberate, vicious and lying campaign against the Ulster Defence Regiment. Before an Anglo-Irish Conference meeting takes place, he says that he will raise various matters about the UDR. But those matters are not raised at the conference. How do I know? I shall explain to the House. I happened to have a meeting with my right hon. Friend the Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) and the Secretary of State after an Anglo-Irish Conference meeting. I went to the meeting in great anger, having listened to Mr. Collins speak in a television programme of what he would say about the UDR to the Secretary of State. I put my views to the Secretary of State and he smiled as he can—there was a twinkle in his eye—and said, "He never mentioned the UDR to me." A Foreign Minister is making trouble against the UDR. He is prepared to slam it, as it were, but he does not say, "There is a serious situation in Northern Ireland and the British Government need extra measures to deal with terrorism." There is not a word about that.

I believe that I am entitled to say that if Mr. Collins can carry out a campaign against the UDR, as he has done, and then say that he is not prepared to accept that the British Government need extra measures to deal with the events that are taking place in Northern Ireland, we have a man who is not prepared to act, as he keeps saying he is, in the interests of all the people of Northern Ireland. We look upon him as a hypocrite and a liar for what he is doing in his campaign.

Who are the UDR men? They are people who give up their sleep at night to look after all sections of the community. They are people who, with their families, are prepared to make sacrifices. I visited a cemetery in Castlederg, an area that is represented by my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Ulster (Rev. William McCrea). On turning to the right after entering the cemetery, all that one can see are the gravestones of UDR men. What do their wives and families think of the campaign that is being waged incessantly against them? I say that Mr. Collins is giving an excuse to the IRA to kill UDR men. That is what he does, and they are set on in that manner.

I have a copy of the memorandum that was issued by the Secretary of State. It says that he has certain aims—I am glad that he has aims—and that he will maintain the rule of law and not let violence prevail. He then says that he will not keep back from the security forces the support that they need. It is strange that the police tell me that they have financial troubles and that they are not receiving the equipment that they need. They tell me that in certain areas they do not have the numbers of patrol cars that they need. It seems that they do not have sufficient personnel vehicles and armoured Land Rovers. They tell me that

their overtime is cut. They point to all the police stations that have only partial opening. That was the position in Loughgall and it is no wonder that the police station was blown up by the terrorists. It was a target and when the police were removed from it, it was blown up.

I trust that the Secretary of State will listen to those who are actually involved in Northern Ireland, who are ordinary men. They must be certain that he will ensure that there is proper support for them. The Secretary of State says that in his memorandum he gives the assurance that violence will not succeed. I say to the right hon. Gentleman that violence will continue in the community. He says that he wants to pull the community away from supporting terrorism. As long as Sinn Fein members sit on councils and carry out the work of councillors—give advice and take people to the Housing Executive to deal with their complaints—that will not break the relationship between the IRA and the community.

Mr. Mallon: Part of the community.

Rev. Ian Paisley: That is what I am emphasising—it is that part of the community that gives the IRA support.

Rev. William McCrea (Mid-Ulster): Can my hon. Friend confirm that rather than such support being diminished in that part of the community, it is increasing? In two recent by-elections in Northern Ireland, electoral support for Sinn Fein rose by between 15 per cent. and 25 per cent., yet we were told that the purpose of the Anglo-Irish Agreement was to take away support from Sinn Fein.

Rev. Ian Paisley: The House should heed my hon. Friend's words. There is no lack of support for the IRA. One Northern Ireland constituency is represented by an hon. Member who does not come to the House, thank God. He is very active in west Belfast. People from his constituency who come to talk to me about European problems say, "Our most active constituency Member is Gerry Adams, and we go to him with our problems." We shall never break the link between them until we say to the IRA, "You will not be admitted to the council chambers of the Province."

The Minister, the Secretary of State and his predecessor have been very firm and have never met Sinn Fein representatives, but they expect us to meet them. They expect the councillors who represent the party that I lead to sit with them. One of my Belfast councillors told me that one night he passed a Sinn Fein councillor who gestured with his finger and said, "We will get you yet."

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): Will the hon. Gentleman confirm, and remind those who may have forgotten, that some Sinn Fein councillors have been shot on terrorist missions?

Rev. Ian Paisley: I understand that someone cannot gain a nomination as a Sinn Fein councillor until he has proved himself with the Armalite and in terrorist activities. All the Sinn Fein councillors are involved in that, yet we have to sit with them. How can decent people be asked to sit with them? If a police officer, a civilian, or a friend of a council member is murdered, the council naturally proposes either to adjourn or to pass a message of condolence to the victim's family, but the Sinn Fein councillors attack the motion and refuse to vote for it. They make it clear why they will not vote for it.

Mr. Dicks: Would the hon. Gentleman believe that Labour councillors in my local authority in England behave in exactly the same way when Tory mayors die?

Rev. Ian Paisley: I am surprised to hear that. I do not want to delve into Tory-Labour policies, but it is a sad state of affairs if it is true that when a Tory mayor dies Labour councillors will not support a message of condolence or offer any sympathy to that person's loved ones.

One Sinn Fein chairman of a council actually said that council workers were a fair target for the IRA to kill. Where do we go from there? I plead with the Government carefully to consider the problem and to begin to deal with the link between the community and the IRA. If we do not break that link, we shall never lessen the support for the IRA, especially when people depend on Sinn Fein members for run-of-the-mill matters.

Ulster is a sad place. Is there any hope? I believe that there is, provided that the Government not only say that they will deal with terrorism, but begin to take effective measures—some of which I have mentioned—so that it can clearly be perceived that there is the will to defeat terrorism. I trust that the agitation from Dublin to hinder the talks in Northern Ireland will cease, and that instead there will be talks about replacing the Anglo-Irish Agreement with an alternative, which, when the IRA is defeated, will guarantee peace and stability for the people of Northern Ireland.

Rev. William McCrea: Does my hon. Friend agree that hon. Members would be interested in hearing the Opposition spokesman outline what effective measures the Labour party is proposing to defeat and eradicate terrorism?

Rev. Ian Paisley: That would be most helpful. It is a shame that my hon. Friend did not ask that question while the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North was speaking. However, the Opposition have an able spokesman to reply to the debate and I am sure that he will spell out their proposals in full.

I trust that there will be proper progress that will bring hope and freedom. As I said in a recent letter to the Prime Minister, we want progress that will set Northern Ireland on the road to the light.

5.26 pm

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): I welcome the statement by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) that, in principle, the Opposition do not dispute the need for emergency legislation. There has been no dispute in the House or in this debate about the need for emergency legislation, so I find it difficult to understand why the Opposition wish to divide the House.

The Secretary of State referred to the statement that he circulated when the Bill was published and in which he set out the policy that the Government are endeavouring to follow. It is important that we consider this legislation alongside the Government's policy and their overall objectives. It is wrong to think that we have ever believed that terrorism will be ended solely by repressive or military means. People say that there must be political measures to end terrorism, but invariably those political measures are wrong.

The correct political framework to surround security policy and legislation should be, first, the determination to

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ensure that terrorism will not succeed. I appreciate that the Secretary of State's policy document includes phrases of that nature but unfortunately their effect and credibility are undermined by the Government's record. They have repeatedly allowed terrorism to succeed because political changes have been brought about as a result of terrorism. The Secretary of State will know that I refer principally to the constitutional change made five years ago, when the status of part of the United Kingdom was changed as a direct result of terrorism. Nobody could possibly believe that there would have been an Anglo-Irish Agreement had there been no terrorist campaign. Everyone knows that the agreement was entered into in the hope of appeasing the sources of that campaign. In doing that, the Government committed the cardinal error of indicating to terrorists that they could achieve success indirectly as a result of terrorism. That was a mistake, and it will be difficult for the Government to adopt a similar policy because of their failings in the past. The Government should at least endeavour in the future to ensure that no further political changes are made in an attempt to appease Irish nationalists, whatever form that appeasement may take.

In providing the correct policy framework for security matters, it is also important to make it clear to the terrorists that their primary objective will not be achieved. The terrorist resorts to violence not out of mindless activism but because he knows that it is the only way in which he can achieve his objective of a united Ireland. Statements by the Secretary of State and other members of the Government constantly refer to the possibility of Northern Ireland's constitutional position changing and are in themselves an encouragement.

It is not good enough simply to repeat the phrase, "There will be no change to the constitutional position of Northern Ireland unless a majority so desire." That holds out the possibility of change. Everyone knows that if one attaches oneself to normal democratic principles, there can be no change. Everyone knows also that there will never be freely given majority consent for a united Ireland. Therefore, constantly to refer to the possiblity of change is quite wrong.

What is wrong with the activities of republican terrorists is not just their methodology, in using the bomb, bullet and sometimes the ballot box as well, but their objective. It must be appreciated that the objective of trying to bring about a united Ireland is in itself wrong. A united Ireland can be achieved only by coercing the people of Northern Ireland by one means or another—whether that means is the violence of the IRA or political or financial blackmail and oppression. In that context, the objective of a united Ireland is wrong, and that lesson must be learnt not just by the Government but by the Labour party and several other parties represented in the House. We must acknowledge that the objective is wrong and immoral; then it will be easier to defeat the expression of it.

Mr. Mallon: I wonder whether the hon. Gentleman realises the import of his remarks. He says that the position taken by the main Opposition party, the party to which I belong, and all the major parties in the Republic of Ireland is not just wrong but immoral. If the hon. Gentleman will examine the logic of that assertion, he may regret having made it. It is based on the premise that there will be no change in the attitudes of the people of Northern Ireland. The hon. Gentleman rules out any possibility of change by persuasion. I am sure that the House does not want another history lesson, because it has already been given one, but it should be remembered that not so long ago the main proponents of armed rebellion against a British presence in Ireland were members of the Protestant community. Therefore, the hon. Gentleman should not make sweeping statements or ascribe immorality to anyone.

Mr. Trimble: The hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) does not display a proper appreciation of the situation. The conflict that exists is one of nationality—between that of the Irish nationalists who came into existence in the 19th century and that of the Ulster British people. No one suggests, in respect of any of the current conflicts in Europe, that people of one nationality could, should or are likely to change their national identity. They would not do that and the same is true of the people of Ulster. They will not change their national identity—and once there is acceptance of that, it will be realised that there cannot be a united Ireland by consent legitimately and freely given. It can come about only as a result of coercion in one form or another. Any attempt to coerce people into accepting the nationality of what is to them a foreign state would be immoral. I say that deliberately and I am fully aware of the implications of that statement.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): It surely cannot be argued that the objective of a neighbouring community to change in time the nationality of others is in itself evil. It is possible that the people of England, Scotland and Wales will change to a European identity in the context of the European Community. Some might argue against that development, but the objective itself cannot be said to be evil. In the case of the Provisional IRA, the evil comes in the methods that are used to distort the objective, rather than there being any evil within the nationalist community.

Mr. Trimble: I am reluctant to enter any discussion of the effects that Britain's membership of the European Community might have on our national identity and allegiance. That is a different issue, which may or may not be advanced slightly tomorrow.

It may be that what the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) thinks of as Irish nationalism is in fact Irish imperialism—the attempt by a nation that exists as a part of Ireland to extend its rule to the whole island, irrespective of the wishes of its people. That is an imperialist claim which seeks some form of Irish irredentism analogous to the Italian irredentism that Mussolini and others sought, and which was of a similar moral character.

Mr. Mallon: Is the hon. Gentleman saying that the Unionist people in the north of Ireland have minds that are frozen in a time warp and that they are incapable of changing? Is not the hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble) only confirming a political condition whose existence many people have always suspected?

Mr. Trimble: We are not in any time warp. The people who are led down the cul-de-sac of history are those who are still serving the aims of Irish nationalism—or, to be more precise, of Irish imperialism. It is up to them to consider their position in that respect. I am making the

point that it is important to end the constitutional uncertainty that the Government's policy has reinforced. That point was graphically made many times by my colleague the former right hon. Member for South Down, when he argued that the Government's actions were keeping the terrorist campaign alive and that it was essential for the Government to end uncertainty. Until they do so, we shall not see an end to the terrorist campaign.

There are lessons to be learnt from the 1920s, whether one considers the civil war in the Irish Free State or the disturbances in Northern Ireland. In both cases, when it became clear to the terrorists that they would not succeed, because the Dublin and Belfast Governments respectively were firmly established, their campaigns of violence quickly wound down.

Rev. Ian Paisley: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that it is immoral to claim that one's constitution gives jurisdiction over part of a territory that does not and cannot belong to one's own country—and in so doing encourage violence in trying to achieve the annexation of that territory?

Mr. Trimble: I agree entirely with what the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) said. Articles 2 and 3 of the Irish constitution provide Irish republican terrorism with a moral mandate, or—as a friend of mine put it the other day—they are a "hunting licence" issued by the Irish Free State. We know what the targets of the hunting licence are.

I have some difficulty with the use of the word "emergency" in the title of the Bill. It has given rise to some misconceptions—especially those of the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North, when he referred to the operation of the rule of law. There can be different views of what constitutes the rule of law. The version that the hon. Gentleman gave us owed not a little to Dicey—it sounded like a garbled version of Dicey, which is fair enough. The mistake that some people make is to equate the rule of law with the current state of English common law, whatever it might be. Consequently, they think that any departure from English common law is a subversion of the rule of law. That is a rather exaggerated view of the merits of common law, which has merits but one should not elevate it to such a position that any departure from it is to be denounced.

We have various standards that spell out in detail the rule of law. In western Europe, the appropriate standard can be found in the European convention on human rights, which sets out a series of standards for the operation of the law as regards human rights, which are generally accepted and have been since their inception in the late 1940s and early 1950s.

The Bill is consistent with the European convention in all respects. It is not necessary for the Government to enter a derogation with regard to the Bill. No derogation operates as regards its predecessors. The Bill can be operated without derogating from the European convention in any way. Only one aspect of the Bill might cause difficulty—if powers of detention were reintroduced and implemented, that would necessitate derogation from the European convention. Apart from that, the legislation is consistent with the European convention.

As that is the case, I wonder why they are referred to as emergency provisions. There is provision within the European convention for derogation in cases of emergency. Under the convention, emergency provisions are those that depart from the convention, but this legislation does not—it is consistent with it. Therefore, it is misleading to think of it as an emergency provision.

It is misleading in another sense. An emergency is, or ought to be, something which is limited in time—of short duration. It should apply when something exceptional has come up, and one has to take exceptional measures to cope with it, which it is hoped will be effective within a short time. One is doing something out of the ordinary, but the Bill is ordinary in that it is consistent with the convention and so the provisions should not be labelled "emergency".

They might have been emergency provisions in 1973, when they introduced the code for detention which was in operation then, and so it was necessary to have derogations from the European convention. We are not derogating from the European convention and the provisions are not emergency in the sense of being short lived. Such legislation has been on the statute book, in one form or another, since 1973 and is likely to be on the statute book for the foreseeable future. I wonder why we insist on thinking of the legislation as temporary or exceptional when it is neither.

The term "consolidation" has been used, but this is not really a consolidation Bill. However, we need consolidating measures to deal with all aspects of anti-terrorist legislation. That is what we should be thinking of—not the Emergency Provisions Acts or the Prevention of Terrorism Acts but what anti-terrorist legislation is required.

The world has a problem with terrorism; it is not unique to either part of Ireland but also comes from other sources. The dangers may increase after 1992, as border controls wind down and other changes take place. There is probably a need for us to consider seriously what form of anti-terrorist legislation the United Kingdom—not merely Northern Ireland—needs. Lord Colville said very cogently in his report on the Prevention of Terrorism act 1986:

> "It seems to me that Her Majesty's Government might like to think again. There is now a very real threat of international terrorism impinging on the United Kingdom, as on any other country . . . It does appear strange that the main measure which is designed to give powers against international terrorism should be annually renewable . . . and completely entangled with the Northern Ireland problem, from which historically the legislation grew. It might be better now to design the range of control needs both at ports and internally to deal with international terrorism from the security viewpoint, with due regard to what is not within the powers of the immigration or customs services. This could with advantage include some points governed at present in detail by the Order . . . There is neither rhyme or reason for some of the distinctions which appear in the Order. The Order does not deal comprehensively with international terrorism. If that were done it would be possible to see what powers, whether more or less, but possibly as a renewable supplement, would be needed for the Northern Ireland situation."

Lord Colville said that in 1987, and we agree that it is desirable to have anti-terrorist legislation in one Act which deals with the kingdom as a whole. It is silly to have at least two main Acts dealing with different aspects of terrorism, because the two interpenetrate. For example, arrest powers are provided for in the Emergency Provisions and the Prevention of Terrorism Acts. Most arrests in Northern Ireland were carried out under the Emergency Provisions Act but in recent years that practice has changed. Now the vast majority are carried out under the Prevention of Terrorism Act.

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The operations of the security forces in Northern Ireland rely quite heavily on the Prevention of Terrorism Act, which is a United Kingdom Act, rather than the Emergency Provisions Act, which is supposed to deal with terrorism in Northern Ireland. It would be better to put the two Acts together, along with whatever other pieces of legislation are required.

I think that the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North might agree with that, because the amendment that he moved refers to a series of measures—inquest public immunity certificates, the abolition of the right of silence—which are not included in the Emergency Provisions Act but deal with related matters. It would be better for those to be put into one Act.

A practical advantage is that it would be so much easier for the people who operate the legislation and those who are affected by it to know what it provides if they could refer to a single Act, and not have to chase through several Acts to find out the position. It would simplify life for policemen and soldiers, who have to operate the legislation, and for citizens who are affected by it.

Access to and knowledge of the law is important, and the present arrangement of legislation does not facilitate that. I urge the Government, rather than to consider almost routine re-enactment of provisions with only minor amendments, to consider comprehensive legislation, on a United Kingdom basis, giving normal provisions to deal with terrorism. The problem exists and will continue to exist in the foreseeable future. There will be terrorist threats of one sort or another. We need to consider what sort of legislation should be passed to deal with them. We may want to make some special additional provisions to deal with particular situations, but we believe that there is an argument for permanent anti-terrorist legislation.

The main provision in the Act is for a different form of trial through what are called the Diplock courts, which are essentially non-jury courts, presided over by a single judge. Clearly, the concept of a single judge gives some hon. Members problems. I confess that I had doubts about whether a single judge was the most effective system

However, after several years' experience, I am satisfied that a single-judge court is the only effective way of dealing with such cases. I know that it is normal to defend the single-judge Diplock courts in terms of the difficulty of providing multi-judge courts in Northern Ireland. The small size of the legal profession there and the age distribution within the Bar mean that it would be extremely difficult to recruit the additional judges who would be needed if we were to have multi-judge courts. There is an argument for saying that, with the unanimity rule, two judges would be sufficient. However, it would still be extremely difficult to staff such courts. Hon. Members will know that there is considerable difficulty at the moment in recruiting judges for the county courts. I believe that there is still one vacancy. There is great difficulty in getting anyone to accept such an appointment. One hears rumours about trawls being made through the Bar library in considerable detail, ranging down to people who are quite junior, in an attempt to persuade people to accept an appointment in the county or Crown courts. The latter provide some of the judicial manpower for the Diplock courts.

The position in the High Court is not altogether happy either, although I do not intend to discuss that in detail now. Nevertheless, there is growing unease in Northern Ireland about the way in which High Court appointments are made. This summer I heard a person who has been involved in politics in the Irish Republic say, "Thanks to the Anglo-Irish Agreement, we now have an input into the selection of judges." I was appalled. If politicians in the Irish Republic continue to boast that they are responsible for the appointment of certain judges, that will have more disastrous consequences for public confidence in the judiciary than any of the provisions in the Bill. However, that is a different matter for another consideration.

Not only is it difficult to recruit judges for multi-judge courts, but such courts are likely to be unsatisfactory. We have the example of the special criminal court in the Irish Republic which consists of three judges—three different lawyers. Those who practise before the special criminal court in the Irish Republic say that the multiplicity of judges provides no defence and no safeguard for the accused. In practice, the senior judge makes the decision. Even if, on occasions, counsel manage to evoke some sympathy in one of the judges, that judge is quickly brought into line by the others. I heard a senior lawyer, who is also involved in politics in the Irish Republic, say unofficially not so long ago that he regarded the special criminal court as a sentencing court. Therefore, having three judges is not by itself a safeguard. A single judge with a reasoned judgment provides a better safeguard, because that single judge knows that he must give his reasons in detail and that the sole responsibility for making a decision rests on him. That leads to a tendency for caution.

I am convinced that in the vast majority of cases, thanks largely to the quality of the judiciary, the single-judge Diplock courts have delivered justice. I sometimes wonder whether those who are so concerned about the danger of judgment by a single man—and who consequently criticise the Diplock courts—occasionally think about the other single-judge courts which we have in Northern Ireland, and which we have had since 1935. I refer to the courts of summary jurisdiction which, as hon Members know, are presided over in Northern Ireland by a single judge, whom we call a resident magistrate and who is equivalent to a stipendiary magistrate in England and Wales. We do not have any benches of justices. We do not have any justices of the peace to exercise judicial functions All the magistrates courts' decisions are made by a single judge. That is what happens in the vast majority of cases that go through the courts of summary jurisdiction.

I should add that I do not have the same confidence in the quality of the magistracy as I have in the quality of the High Court judges, but perhaps I should go into that in more detail at another time and in another place However, that point should be of greater concern than the Diplock courts to those who are worried about the effect of having a single judge.

I cite as evidence the way in which the Diplock courts operate. The effective conviction rate in the Diplock courts varies between half and three quarters. It is a little higher than the conviction rate in jury trials, but that is only to be expected because an accused person who is to appear before a single judge is less likely to plead not guilty in a hopeless case. There will always be those who will plead not guilty in hopeless cases before a jury in the hope that their clever lawyer will get them off. However, people do not pursue hopeless cases to the same extent before a single

judge. Consequently, it is natural that there should be a slightly higher conviction rate in single-judge courts compared with jury courts.

Diplock courts have another advantage. English lawyers wishing to make comparisons, who can be bothered to come over to Belfast to look at the operation of the courts, find that the business is conducted with remarkable efficiency. Trials in Northern Ireland rarely take half the time that is taken for an equivalent trial in England. That is because there are certain lines of argument that one would not bother to pursue before a single judge because he will not bother listening to it. Things are different with a jury. One cannot try it on before a judge as one would before a jury. Judges are quick to pick up the points and the argument must be put more precisely and more concisely. That is why trials proceed much more quickly, with consequent and not inconsiderable savings to the public purse, though that is by the way.

I am conscious that if the suggestion that I made earlier about permanent legislation to deal with terrorism on a United Kingdom basis were adopted, that would allow for the use of Diplock-style courts in Great Britain. Of course, it depends on the mechanism that is used to introduce the Diplock courts and I have one in mind. The mechanism could be borrowed from the Irish Republic's Criminal Law and Procedure Act 1887, which provided for special courts and for non-jury courts. That Act was on the statute book in Ireland from 1887 until 1922. There is nothing unusual about such legislation. We have always had it in Ireland in one shape or form. The former Lord Justice Turlough O'Donnell used to refer to that Act as "the old Act". He had been in practice long enough to have heard stories about the operation of "the old Act". Under that Act, it was possible for an order to be made that all cases in a particular area, usually defined by county, were to be held before the special court, or for cases to be moved from one part of the jurisdiction to another. Borrowing from that procedure, it would be possible for the Lord Chancellor to make an order, subject to parliamentary approval, for the operation of Diplock-style courts in any jurisdiction within the kingdom or possibly within any part of the jurisdiction, or with regard to specific cases.

The use of such a mechanism would enable Diplock-style courts to be used in England in terrorist cases. I believe that there is a serious argument for so doing. Terrorist cases are not like ordinary crimes. A terrorist action strikes at the whole community and gives rise to an emotional reaction that can affect the operation of justice. There are parallels here with cases that have already been mentioned, such as the Guildford and Birmingham cases, which gave rise to strong emotional reactions. In that context, juries will not operate terribly effectively. It has been suggested that, in terrorist cases in England, juries will inevitably convict no matter who appears before them. That is because the juror himself or herself feels a potential object of the terrorist act. Although he or she will not be personally involved, because of the way in which terrorism strikes at the community, an individual serving on a jury will feel personally involved and, as a consequence, may not render a true verdict.

That is part of the reason why jury trials were discontinued in Northern Ireland. It was not just because of intimidation of the witnesses or other parties involved. The real fear was of perverse verdicts, perverse convictions and, in some cases, perverse acquittals. It would be a brave practitioner in England and Wales who, looking at a jury dealing with a terrorist case, could not say that there were no perverse convictions.

Rev. Ian Paisley: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that in the debate on that matter it was pointed out that there were only two perverse decisions by juries to which the judge drew attention at that time? That is on the record.

Mr. Trimble: Is the hon. Gentleman referring to a particular time in the early 1970s in Northern Ireland or to a particular time in England?

Rev. Ian Paisley: I am referring to juries in Northern Ireland at that time.

Mr. Trimble: It is difficult to establish the incidence of perverse acquittals and convictions in Northern Ireland at that time. Such issues depend so much on individual appreciation and opinion. No one can be absolutely sure of the facts. The numbers involved may be small. No matter what the rate, when a problem arises one is justified in looking at the form of trial in order to find a different form in which there can be a degree of neutrality.

The decisions that a Diplock-style court makes will not always be right. In terrorist cases, however, there is a strong case for saying that a Diplock-style court will be better than a jury trial. It will not be perfect; any human system is bound to contain imperfections and failures. I should be amazed if wrong verdicts had not been reached in the Diplock courts in Northern Ireland.

However, what strikes me is the relative paucity of instances in which people have produced convincing evidence to show that there was a miscarriage of justice. I say that in the knowledge that recently evidence has been produced that shows that there was a miscarriage of justice. I refer to the Armagh UDR Four. I am now convinced that they were innocent and that they were improperly convicted. That case stands out by itself; there have been no other similar cases of which I am aware in which convincing evidence was produced to show that there had been a miscarriage of justice.

There is gossip from time to time in legal circles that a decision may have been wrong. During one of the so-called supergrass cases a few years ago, I was told by counsel that he was satisfied that his client was wrongly convicted. He was on a minor charge—of allowing his premises to be used by terrorists in which they could hold meetings. According to counsel, the problem in that case was that two people of the same name lived in that street, that the supergrass had identified the wrong person with the same name, that his client was innocent and that he had a perfect alibi that would have shown that he was in a completely different place at the time, which would have secured his acquittal had he been able to give his alibi in court.

Unfortunately, however, the principal person accused, the leader of the IRA in the area concerned, gave an order to the effect that nobody was to go into the witness box or to call evidence in their own instance. The other person, although he was not involved with the IRA, had to go back into that area, so he accepted the IRA's order not to give evidence, thus allowing himself to be convicted, even though he was innocent. His conviction was quashed on appeal. All the convictions in that case were quashed on appeal, but that is another story. That is one of the very

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few instances of which I am aware in which, according to counsel, the accused was wrongly convicted. There will have been some wrong convictions, but not many.

The other principal provisions relating to the Diplock courts deal with confessions and the reversal of the onus of proof in certain cases. Colville recommended that the Government ought to consider more closely the videotaping of interviews. All interviews are monitored by television cameras. A senior police officer looks at the television screen from time to time. If interviews were videotaped, without sound, the video tapes would be available to the inspector to see whether any ill-treatment had occurred. A substantial amount of investment would be involved in providing a bank of video tapes. A certain amount of time would also be involved in looking at the video tapes. If the interrogation took place over a long period, one would have to look at the video tape for a similar period. Colville made the point, which has some weight, that the amount of time involved in looking at the video tapes would lead to a saving of time at the trial, since hopeless points would not be pursued when there was no evidence to back them up.

There are certain reservations about videotaping. There would have to be an absence of sound. It is important that the words spoken should not be available, since that might enable terrorist organisations to discover what information the security forces had about their operations in particular places and what statements had been made by persons under interrogation, perhaps implicating other people. Precautions would also have to be taken to protect the identity of the police officers concerned so that they could not be targeted.

I do not, however, believe that these problems are insurmountable. They would reduce the number of cases in which people argue that brutality has occurred. There are not many cases, I believe, in which the police give way to the temptation to use physical abuse. However, allegations are made to that effect. A method that could effectively quash those allegations would be very much in the interests of the security forces, because a lot of silly people believe these allegations. It would be of considerable value to be able to refute them effectively.

The provision relating to the reversal of the onus of proof requires little comment. The judiciary operates it sensibly. In that context, the effect of the reversal of the onus of proof is to compel the person charged with the possession of explosives or firearms to go into the witness box. The way that judges operate that provision is to compel a person to go into the witness box to give evidence of his knowledge, or absence of knowledge, of things found on his premises.

A clear analogy can be made with the provisions in the Police and Criminal Evidence (Northern Ireland) Order 1989, which modifies the so-called right to silence. The concern expressed in some quarters about this modification of the right to silence is perhaps exaggerated. When one looks at the sensible way in which the courts handle the reversal of the onus of proof cases, there are ample grounds for reassurance.

The other main provision in the Bill relates to the power of detention. I am afraid that this is a matter on which we part company with the Government. It is not right to rule out the use of that power. I appreciate that that power is provided for in the legislation, but statements made from time to time by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland appear to rule out its use. That is not wise. A serious case can be made for the use of the detention power. We know that the police and the Army are having difficulty over apprehending persons, with sufficient evidence to bring cases to court. One only has to look at the figures mentioned by Diplock and Colville and at those that are available elsewhere. In 1984-85, well over 500 cases a year went through the Diplock courts. That figure rose to nearly 700 in 1985-86. In recent years, however, it has dropped back to just over 400. Fewer cases are going through the Diplock courts.

We know that in many cases guilty men go free, either because witnesses will not come forward or because the terrorist is careful enough to destroy any forensic evidence. Moreover, he has been trained to withstand interrogation. There is, therefore, a strong argument for looking again at the use of the detention powers. The point that is always made is that they were tried and did not work. They did work—in 1922, 1940 and 1956. They did not work in 1971.

One must consider carefully the reasons why they did not work in 1971. If one does so, one sees that the reasons were that the intelligence base that was used was poor and that during the previous two years the RUC had effectively been prevented from operating by the Government. The result was that the RUC's information was out of date. Moreover, the Army had not built up any effective information.

Not only was the intelligence base poor but the operation was carried out crudely in all senses of the word. When ordinary squaddies are told, as they were in 1971, that they have an opportunity to get their own back on the people who have been shooting and throwing stones at them in the previous months, it is not surprising that some of them take those words at face value and get their own back. It was understandable. Of course, it was wrong. It helped to corrupt the operation. One needs to look carefully at the mistakes that were made then and consider how they could be remedied. I believe that one can remedy them.

We now have a much better intelligence base on which to operate than we had in 1971. That is indisputable. We also know that a limited number of persons are involved in terrorism. We may argue about the exact number, but it is common ground that it is a limited number and that the key players take care never to become involved in ways that would expose them to arrest. That is the argument in favour of selective detention.

As hon. Members will be aware, it is just over a week since we had a particularly appalling atrocity in my constituency. A week ago last Saturday, four wildfowlers who had gone out on a day's recreation were ambushed and slaughtered by the IRA. Of the four, two were policemen and two had no connection with the security forces. They were just friends who went out on that occasion. Such an incident gives rise to considerable feelings and tension. I shall not indulge in an emotional statement on the matter, but I should like to quote from an address delivered at the first funeral of the victims last Monday. The address was given by the Right Rev. Matthews of the first Lurgan Presbyterian church, and former moderator of the Presbyterian church—the largest non-Catholic church in Ulster. He is a responsible person. He was speaking at the funeral of Keith Dowey, a young

man who was not a member of the security forces. Keith was the product of a mixed marriage—his mother was a Roman Catholic. The Right Rev. Matthews said:

"May I remind the Government that its primary responsibility is the protection of its citizens. In this respect, the Government is signally failing at present. How can our society enjoy normality or peace while vicious criminals, known to the police, are free to stalk the land and strike at will? . . . The community is tired of words. It cries for action. Statements about a determination to win sound hollow to broken hearts unless the freedom of the killers is removed.

Our Government is far too much concerned for our reputation abroad and far too little for our safety at home. Our Government seems to reserve far greater sensitivity for the feelings of those who give latent or overt support to terrorists, than for decent, upright, law-abiding citizens.

Of the 346 murders"—

it is now 347—

"committed by terrorists in the last five years, three out of every four were committed by republican terrorists and one out of every four by loyalist terrorists. Only one in 10 of republican terrorist murders have been resolved in the courts while one in two of loyalist terrorist murders have been so resolved.

Something more is needed to compensate for the inadequacies of the law to deal with terrorists sheltered by sympathisers.

Our Government has been ill-advised in its reluctance to introduce selective internment. How can we continue to expose our security forces (and civilians) in their daily duty and in their times of leisure to the evil of these psychopaths? It is surely time for common sense to prevail. I believe that the vast majority of both communities would breathe a sigh of relief to have known killers from both communities, in proportion to their numbers, put out of circulation.

One sure way to make the situation worse is for the Government to continue its present inaction in this regard."

As the Secretary of State will know, the Right Rev. Matthews had many occasions on which he could have criticised the Government when he was moderator of the Presbyterian church. He told me after the funeral that he never took any of those opportunities. That statement made at Keith Dowey's graveside was the first time that the Right Rev. Matthews had publicly attacked the Government. He is a responsible man. He expressed a widespread feeling when he called for more action and specifically for the operation of selective detention powers to take the terrorists out of operation.

I can conclude in no better way than by repeating the last sentence of that statement.

"One sure way to make the situation worse is for the Government to continue its present inaction in this regard."

The present legislation merely extends the existing legislation with minor changes. The Government have stated that they will continue their security policy. As the hon. Member for Antrim, North said, to continue that policy is to condemn the community to further terrorism and suffering. We need more effective action.

6.15 pm

Sir David Mitchell (Hampshire, North-West): I shall be brief but I want to put one particular point to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. Before I do so, I stress that those in Northern Ireland who believe that they can persuade United Kingdom Ministers to change their policy by any degree of terrorism have wholly misjudged the British character and the character of Ministers in this or any other Government. Those in Northern Ireland or the Republic of Ireland who believe that acts of terrorism can change the view of the British electorate have sadly misjudged the character of the British people. That point needs to be put across because we must disabuse at every opportunity those who involve themselves in terrorism of the misunderstanding and misjudgment that lies behind their expectation that they can achieve something by their acts of terrorism.

I support the Bill, first, because it enacts legislation that enables the Government to prosecute the campaign against terrorism with fairness and firmness; secondly, because it recognises that we shall need a continuing and sustained campaign against violence from either side of the sectarian divide; and, thirdly, because it seeks to ensure that terrorists are caught and brought to trial within the due processes of law, with all the rights that that confers on a suspect until he is proven guilty.

While dealing with the due processes of law, I should like to ask my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, or my right hon. Friend the Minister of State, who will reply to the debate, whether any research has been carried out into the right of silence. If so, what has the research shown? My other questions to my right hon. Friend the Minister are the portent of what I want to say to the House. Is he satisfied that the RUC and the security forces have the benefit of all the electronic research and development that they need? Considerable scientific advances have been made in electronics and the House would like to know that the RUC and security forces have the most advanced research and development at their disposal.

We all know that science has reached the point at which a house can be spotted from a satellite. It seems that we should be able to do more to spot an illegal border crossing than we do with the methods that we now use. Has my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State noted the high proportion of offences that take place within striking distance of the border? One must ask why the border is such an attractive area for committing offences. To what extent is there still the opportunity for terrorists to strike and escape across the border into relative safety? I am not in any way attacking the Gardai, who have been doing much more than they used to and who are co-operating immensely well with out security forces. Nevertheless, a disproportionately high number of offences are occurring in that area and it leads one to ask whether more can be done to ensure co-operation and prevention.

Finally, would there be an advantage in applying electronic tagging to some of those who are on bail, bound over to keep the peace, serving non-custodial sentences, on probation or granted a remission of sentence for scheduled offences under part I of the Bill? It might even apply to those who would be candidates for detention, although I understand why my right hon. Friend does not want detention to apply in the Province. Nevertheless, that might be an area where something can be done.

My questions are all in the area of electronics, technology and technological advance. I seek assurances that all that can be done is being done to introduce technological advances to assist the forces of security and law and order in the Province.

6.21 pm

Mr. Seamus Mallon (Newry and Armagh): We have had an interesting debate with a smattering of political opinion and historical reference—I almost said historical fact. It is right to consider the Bill in a political dimension because in the last analysis there is not a clear distinction between solving security problems and solving political

[Mr. Seamus Mallon]

problems. If hon. Members believe that a solution can be found in terms of security—I do not—they are going in the wrong direction. That is one of the myths that has caused problems for legislation throughout the years. One of the difficulties is that that has had an effect on the political process. We should not think of the two issues separately. They are so closely intertwined and interlocked that we cannot look at one without also looking at the other. That has been made obvious by some speeches.

I challenged the hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble) on his views about morality or immorality in relation to political stances. The hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) referred to it. It is remarkable that the great political obsession of the IRA is with the immorality of partition. Over the years all its statements and everything that it has written refer to the immorality of partition.

At one stage when our party confronted the IRA across the table with the contradictions of its position, we said, "Look, you cannot judge these things in terms of morality or immorality. They are there and that is the reality." The use of immoral methods can never be a basis for dealing with something that one considers to be wrong. It is difficult, if not silly, for anybody who values the political process to state that a political ideology is immoral because he does not agree with it or because others have debased or abused it.

The hon. Member for Upper Bann said that there were no circumstances in which the Unionist people of the north of Ireland would ever change their minds. I assume that he is so strongly convinced of the conviction of the Unionist people that he believes that they will not change their minds. Alternatively, is he telling us that they are incapable of moving out of what I call a time warp? Only a short time ago the leaders of Republican armed insurrection in the north of Ireland came from the very same tradition. Think of Roddy McCorley from north Antrim, John Mitchell from the area of my constituency and Theobald Wolfe Tone. I could go on for ever. When we talk in those terms we must be absolutely clear that we are not locking ourselves into historical traps. One of our difficulties is that the warping of history has played such a dominant role that we sometimes do not see the present clearly or anticipate the future.

Mr. Trimble: The hon. Gentleman is making the mistake that is common to Irish Nationalists. He misunderstands and misrepresents the 1798 incidents. Wolfe Tone was never a member of the Ulster British community. By no stretch of the imagination could he possibly be described as such. Those Presbyterians were not all of the Presbyterian community. The element of that community who supported the united Irish ideals were not seeking the Irish nationalist state or participating in an Irish national enterprise. They were essentially seeking democratic rights and reform within the kingdom. That can be seen by how, within months of the Act of Union, it was completely accepted by the Ulster British people.

Mr. Mallon: There is a small element of truth in that. One could accept that, if one did not have the precedent of the United States' war of independence involving the same people of sturdy Presbyterian stock. What did they do when they reached the United States? They led the removal —that is a euphemism—of the British presence and set up that country. To their credit, they provided that growing state with a large number of Presidents. If the hon. Gentleman's point were taken in isolation, there would be an element of truth in it, but Irish people, wherever they may be, can get out of a time warp. The antecedents of the present Unionist community have proved that in the past and they will undoubtedly show that breadth of vision again in the future.

Sir David Mitchell: May I return to the point that the hon. Gentleman made at the beginning of his speech when he said that the IRA seeks to justify its claim on the grounds of the immorality of the border? Can he tell us whether the IRA is sustained in that view by the constitution of the Republic?

Mr. Mallon: It is absolutely wrong to attribute immorality to any decision that has been made on a political basis. If anyone went through the records of this House or of any other Parliament, he would find decision after decision that was wholly questionable if it were judged in terms of morality. Partition exists. It is a fact of life, whether we like it or not. If I want to change it, I must change it by peaceful, democratic means—by the power of persuasion. That is where the absolute difference lies. That is the rub in relation to the Bill.

The important thing to remember is that, irrespective of how people view the partition of Ireland, there can be no justification for taking life and for the other violence that occurs in the north of Ireland. To try to pull a cloak of pseudo-respectability over such violence with discussions on the morality or immorality of what happened many years ago evades the issue.

We have been told that those in the north of Ireland who view things from a Unionist perspective will never change their mind. If that is so, they should have been jumping up and down with joy the night the Anglo-Irish Agreement was signed. They should have lit bonfires and stood drinks for the rest of us because, in those circumstances, the real victory belongs to them. If the hon. Member for Upper Bann is correct, the Anglo-Irish Agreement should reinforce the perspective that he believes will exist in perpetuity. I happen to believe, however, that the people of the north of Ireland are more mature and will not allow themselves to be locked in one specific position. If the threat of violence could be removed and a decent standard of living achieved so that people were free from existing pressures and strains, they would examine carefully the political options available to them. There will, however, be no miracles as the current situation cannot be cured by them, but by changes created painstakingly at the bottom. Every stage of progress will contribute not just to the present but to the future.

Ever since I was elected to the House, I have used this opportunity to express my views on the emergency legislation. Today, the Secretary of State said—no doubt he will correct me if I am wrong, but I hope that I have got it exactly right—that he had to make sure that the law is effective to defeat terrorism. I do not believe that that is the business of the law. The defeat of terrorism goes wider than that; it is something different. If one uses the law to defeat terrorism, the process of law is demeaned because it means that the law must be changed. Consider how many times the law has been changed in relation to the

emergency legislation. It has been added to, amended, and some would say bent to deal with an objective with which the law does not exist to deal.

Those who break the law must be made amenable to it and the law must protect society. Above all, one must ensure that the integrity of the law survives, whatever the era in which it operates. Unfortunately, the Provisional IRA has allowed and encouraged the Government to demean and debase their high standards of law and the integrity of the legal system. Those problems do not apply to the north of Ireland alone; the same thing has happened here. The Birmingham Six and the Guildford Four cases arose from the pressures exerted on the legal process to solve terrorist acts. Had that pressure not been exerted, we should not face the problems connected with those cases. In recent times, the judiciary, to its credit, has not allowed itself to be subjected to such pressure. We must not, however, overlook the danger that such pressure poses to our legal process.

As in the Dail Eireann, it is always comfortable to believe that one is part of the moral majority in debates such as this. We are back to morality again, but I am seeking to use it in a different context. It is always comfortable to be part of the moral majority and to have that little bit of self-righteousness on one's side. I do not feel that in this debate because I believe that, by trying to defeat terrorism by bending and amending the law, we are, in effect, creating terrorism, especially among young people. Those young people often get it in the neck for actions carried out by others—I know that from experience in my constituency and others and from my day-to-day work. Every time a young person is stopped and subjected to harassment and abuse, carried out legally under the emergency legislation, that young person moves further and further away from the norm in Northern Ireland. It makes that person easier prey for the terrorists in his community.

The House will remember the recent incident in Derry when a man was used as a human bomb. He was declared missing because they could not find anything to bury—we all remember that day. A Sinn Fein spokesman was quoted in the newspapers in the north of Ireland, saying:

"We will retain our support—have no doubt about that; the army will be in the estates raiding houses and telling kids that their fathers are murderers. They will be doing our job for us."

Sinn Fein knows—it plays on it—that every time there is an abuse of the emergency legislation by the Army, the police, the UDR or whoever, it will be the net gainer. We must face up to that.

Today, the Ulster centre for study of conflict, at the university of Ulster—I assure the House that it is not an SDLP mouthpiece—issued a report that said:

"Progress is essential if the legitimacy of the Security forces, including the RUC, is not to be further undermined within the Catholic community."

I agree with the hon. Member for Antrim, North that some people will never support the forces of law because of their political ideology. I do not accept, however, that everyone who happens to be of the same religious persuasion as me is a potential terrorist. I shall never accept that a young person who goes to a Catholic school should be looked upon with suspicion because he happens to have long hair, wears jeans and is a Catholic. The Secretary of State should keep his eye on the legislation because of that problem.

By implication, the hon. Member for Mid-Ulster (Rev. William McCrea) made reference to the by-election at which I spent four days canvassing in the wind and rain. I made time to go to that area as I believed that it was crucial, coming after the incidents when men were strapped to their cars and made human bombs. Imagine my disgust when we lost that by-election by six votes, but my feelings were made even worse when I looked at the register and saw the people who did not vote. They were not the ordinary people living on the estates, but those people who pontificate to all of us about politics, those people who offer us advice on how best to end our terrible problems. Those are the people who did not come out to show their revulsion at those acts that took place within the north of Ireland. That is reprehensible.

I must refer the Secretary of State to harassment. People who were not supporters of Sinn Fein—and who would not vote for it—raised their concern in house after house. This problem affects people going to work, young people and children on their way to and from school. It is not planned, but it is happening time and again. The problem is reaching crisis proportions. I referred to it at a party conference at the weekend, and I shall do so again now. Something is substantially wrong, and the sooner that we get to grips with it the better.

Like other hon. Members present, I have seen more than my share of the violence and suffering. I clearly want to see an end to that, but I am worried about the rake's progress of the past 20 years. It is a matter of historical fact, and for want of a better time we could start with the period of internment. We should stop using euphemisms such as "detention" and call it what it is—internment without trial. Lord Justice Bennett reported on the brutality in Castlereagh and in the Gough barracks in Armagh. Then there were the affairs that Mr. Stalker and Mr. Stevens tried to investigate, as well as all the legislation introduced in the House. The rake's progress is going one step further each time, because what had already been decided on did not work. The question is, who breaks the cycle, and where will it end? There are those who advocate the introduction of internment without trial. That would not work—the Ministers in the Northern Ireland Office also know that—but once one goes down that slippery slope towards the rake's progress, one must go a little further, because there will always be atrocities and terrible outcries against them. There will always be people who point the finger at Ministers and say that they are the people responsible, because they are not doing enough.

That is not the case. The trouble is not that the law is not rigorously enforced, or that there is not enough stringency, or that the law is not repressive enough; the trouble is that the problem of terrorism in the north of Ireland cannot be solved only by the use of law. For that reason, the basic premise in the introduction of these measures is as faulty as the other elements in that rake's progress.

Cynicism comes in when we see what is happening. People in England, Scotland and Wales should examine the matter carefully, for it is British justice that is being demeaned. I happen to be one of the people who admire British justice; I am not cynical about it. I do not go along with the supposed view of Mahatma Gandhi, who, when asked what he thought of British justice, is said to have replied—although I do not believe it—that he thought it would be a good idea. There is a good and proper system

[Mr. Mallon]

of justice here, but it has been demeaned, because it has been made to do that which it is not geared or written to do.

As someone who lives in the heart of south Armagh and who has seen more terrorism than I care to remember, I ask the Secretary of State to believe one point. What do the IRA, the Ulster Defence Association and the Ulster Volunteer Force fear most? It is not soldiers, because in many ways the soldiers fulfil their purpose—indeed, help them; it is not the police, because as long as policemen are around they are targets and they can be blamed; it is not the Ulster Defence Regiment, which is of great benefit in many ways, because it will react and the spiral will continue. It is not that type of law; if it were capable of inspiring fear, the problems of the past 21 years would be long over. What those organisations fear most is normality and a stable society. They fear the normal way in which the law works, and in which society can go about its business. Above all, they fear the normal way in which their children can go about their business without being afraid of being made the butt of this type of legislation.

Although it will be a matter for Committee work and for further reading, I should make some reference to the power of seizure contained in clause 18(4), which gives the Army power to impose significant penalties, especially in relation to the closure of border roads. The police already have that power, so why should it be extended? If we are to call a spade a spade, it means that someone can incur a substantial penalty without any judicial intervention. In other words, a piece of machinery valued at £20,000 or £30,000 can be taken from a person without any recourse to judicial intervention. Surely that is wrong. Another problem is that people's documents can be taken away and read on a mere suspicion.

We had great problems in this country with journalists recently. I can imagine the events in the north of Ireland that will happen—or will be set up—and will then be used cynically. A journalist could be driving along the road, and that power could be invoked by a soldier. The journalist says that the information is privileged. Can hon. Members imagine that happening to a politician? I know that it will, and I am almost sure that I know to whom it will happen. However, it is inevitable: once we introduce such legislation, we must be prepared for it to be abused. No one can say, as the Secretary of State did, that it will not happen; it will happen, because there will be those in the security services who will be silly enough to abuse it. There will also be those among terrorist groups who will be cynical enough to ensure that a situation is engineered to make it happen. There is already substantial power in this regard; why repeat the procedure?

I am also concerned about the problem of items intended for terrorist purposes. It is possible to reduce the possibilities to absurdity. A sympathiser of the IRA or Sinn Fein could have in his or her house marzipan to make pastries; however, that material is also used for making explosives.

Mr. Ken Maginnis (Fermanagh and South Tyrone): Nonsense.

Mr. Mallon: I can tell the hon. Gentleman of a case in my constituency where an arrest and detention was made on that basis: it is a matter of record, and I shall let the hon. Gentleman have the details. I wonder whether he would also laugh if I told him that fertilisers and diesel oil are also used to make bombs. In a rural area, it is almost inevitable that there will be both fertiliser and diesel oil in almost all farmyards. One can imagine the problem. In such circumstances, the essential legal problem—or non-legal problem—is that the onus is on a person to prove that he did not have those substances for terrorist purposes. That is when the law is so bad, because it puts the onus of proof on the person involved to show that he was not going to use the material for terrorist purposes.

In terms of codes of practices, there was an opportunity to do something about that. Clauses 48 and 49 could have enabled the Secretary of State to make statutory codes for the exercise of emergency powers—something for which we have been asking for a long time. The Bill will not do that, but will still rely on the non-statutory guide to emergency powers. There will be a clear distinction between the implementation of codes of practice in relation to emergency regulations and normal law. Now is the time to get to grips with that. If we are satisfied, as we should be, that the codes of practice are adhered to, why not make them statutory, as they are in relation to the rest of law?

Lord Colville's view on complaints has been mentioned. It is a crucial issue, because the complaints procedure in relation to the Royal Ulster Constabulary is not working properly. That cannot be said often enough, and it is not a party political point. I should like to be able to say that it was working properly and effectively, because I was one of the people who, for years, exerted pressure to get it, but it is not working properly. There is no complaints system in relation to Army procedure. There are those who will say, "Of course there is a procedure—go to the local colonel in charge." But the colonel in charge is not in contact with the community. I deal with such cases on an almost daily basis. Lord Colville suggests the appointment of an independent commission. If we want to make doubly sure that the legislation will not allow harassment, we should have an independent commission so that immediate redress can be sought.

Another grave omission from the Bill, a recommendation that Lord Colville made not just once, but twice—in 1989 and 1990—is that the use of excessive force in self-defence could, in effect, result in a charge of manslaughter. That recommendation, which Lord Colville made twice, must surely be adopted eventually. If it were, we should be much better equipped legally to deal with incidents labelled "shoot to kill" and, even better, we could have a system of inquests.

I went to observe the last such inquest in Craigavon courthouse. It was appalling and like a film made from a Kafka novel, with policemen and witnesses hiding behind screens and a jury sitting hidden from the view of those giving evidence. The continuation of such inquests has been reinforced by a decision of the House of Lords, against the wishes of the High Court in the north of Ireland, chaired by the Lord Chief Justice. Such a system should be dealt with, because there can be no confidence in the legal and judicial process while there is such a total gap and difference between what is happening there and what happens here in England, Wales, and Scotland. The systems are substantially and fundamentally different. Why should that be so, especially in circumstances where a change is needed and when we are trying to build confidence?

Those are my general points. Do I believe that there is a need for emergency legislation when there is horrific violence, such as we have seen? Yes, there is need for adequate legislation, but there is also the absolute need to try to ensure that ordinary, normal law is used whenever possible, and we do not always use the escape hatch of tacking on another little bit of emergency legislation because things have got slightly worse. That is demeaning the process of law in Northern Ireland.

6.54 pm

Rev. William McCrea (Mid-Ulster): We have had an interesting debate, traversing a number of subjects, including one that comes to mind as we approach Christmas—that people will be in danger of arrest because they possess marzipan. As it is the beginning of the Christmas period, people will be making their cakes and the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) said that there was fear of harassment in a part of the community because people possess something to assist them in baking Christmas cakes for their families.

We have also been told that the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh has a clearer understanding than the hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble) about what the Unionist population believe. The hon. Member for Newry and Armagh said that the hon. Member for Upper Bann gave the impression that the Unionist population were in a time warp. The hon. Member for Newry and Armagh is convinced that he knows better and that the hon. Member for Upper Bann is in the time warp, not the Unionist population.

Perhaps the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh does not realise that the other evening a poll was recorded in the *Belfast Telegraph*. It was interesting because, of those questioned, no member of the Protestant community supported the Social Democratic and Labour party, but a number of members of the Roman Catholic community supported both the Ulster Unionist party and the Democratic Unionist party. How can he suggest that he has entered into the minds of the Unionist population and knows what they are thinking? I wholeheartedly agree with the hon. Member for Upper Bann. The hon. Member for Newry and Armagh should not be surprised to learn that the Unionist population have no interest in changing their nationality or citizenship. It is beyond belief that he should show such horror on his face and try to make something of that.

We are dealing with a serious matter and I have heard charges today of harassment and certain actions of members of the security forces, the Ulster Defence Regiment, about whom the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh made a sweeping statement a few minutes ago. We are not on a picnic but are dealing with guerrilla warfare, one of the most vicious types of warfare against an innocent population, the vast majority of people in Northern Ireland. There are no niceties of war. We must remember that the IRA has declared war on the British population in Northern Ireland.

Few hon. Members understand the nightmare in Northern Ireland. There are many hon. Members who have little understanding of the sorrow and tragedy. They stand back from it and many have not tried to find out the reality of what is happening on the ground and what the community is going through. I invite right hon. and hon. Members to visit Northern Ireland more frequently to see exactly what is happening. It is part of the United Kingdom and they should be interested in ensuring that they have personal knowledge of the measures they recommend, for which they vote and about which they speak, instead of being fodder in the voting Lobbies at the end of the debate.

I have listened to the official Opposition's spokesman, the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara), and to the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh, but I have yet to hear them make any positive suggestions about how we should deal with the terrorist conspiracy, threat and rebellion that exists in a part of the United Kingdom. How do they think we should deal with terrorism and stop the men of violence?

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North spoke about civil liberties and individual freedoms and said that the Bill was "repression by reflex action". Has he any understanding of the horror, terror and turmoil suffered by innocent members of the community or any idea of the extent to which they are living with repression? Many of them are prisoners in their own houses. They are afraid to go out at night for fear of being murdered. That is the reality.

May god speed the day when the British people and their elected representatives in this House come to care more about the victims of terrorism than about the terrorists. It is about time that they understood what the victims are going through. I draw attention not only to the plight of the families and widows of those who have been murdered but to that of those who have suffered attacks and are still alive, who are forgotten and who do not appear in the statistics compiled in connection with the tragedy in Northern Ireland. It is about time that the House alerted itself to the sad facts surrounding the terrorism that has blighted our community for the past 20 years.

Mr. Alex Carlile: Every hon. Member will agree with what the hon. Gentleman is saying about the suffering to which the victims of terrorism are subjected, but does he share the rejection by the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley), on theological grounds, of reconciliation between the communities of Northern Ireland?

Rev. William McCrea: That is a red herring if ever there was one. With great respect, that was a pathetic intervention coming from someone who has little knowledge of the turmoil and suffering that the people of Northern Ireland have to go through.

Mr. Carlile: But the hon. Member for Antrim, North said it.

Rev. William McCrea: My hon. Friend was making a theological point about reconciliation and the way in which the ecumenists abuse the term, which is a scriptural term referring to man's reconciliation with God, given that man is at enmity with God. It is pathetic for the hon. and learned Gentleman to seek to bring that into the debate, and if he had any knowledge at all of theology he would know that my hon. Friend's statement was quite right.

Rev. Ian Paisley: My hon. Friend will be aware that I mentioned reconciliation in connection with the ecumenical movement. It is a pity that the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) did not find out what the ecumenists meant by reconciliation before he asked his question. They mean that Protestantism should

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be annexed to Romanism and that every Protestant should now accept that the Pope should be the head of a universal church. That is anathema to me, and, if the hon. and learned Gentleman wants to know why, I shall talk to him outside the House.

Rev. William McCrea: I note that some Opposition Members are reeling. If one throws a stone into a pack of dogs, those hit most squeal the loudest. If hon. Members want a theological debate, they should be willing to listen to it. The hon. and learned Gentleman's intervention was a red herring, and it is clear that the Opposition do not like the answer. I appreciate my hon. Friend's intervention and his exposition of what ecumenism is all about.

We often hear pious statements about sympathy and the rest. I am reminded of a speech made by the hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens) in our debate on the return of capital punishment for terrorists. He said that the House had been full of words and sympathy and that what the country needed was action. Opposition Members know little about my constituents' feelings. They have not been to their homes or spoken to the widows and children of the victims about their grief. It is easy to utter pious words of sympathy, but they are no comfort whatever to those who have suffered the IRA's vile and vicious attacks on the community. *[Interruption.]* If the hon. Member for South Down (Mr. McGrady) wishes to intervene, I shall be happy to allow him to do so.

People make sweeping statements against the security forces. In recent days, a priest from Dungannon, Denis Faul, has engaged in his customary black propaganda against the RUC, saying that it was in cahoots with the loyalist gunmen in the murder of Roman Catholics in Northern Ireland. That is a foul and diabolical deception. There is no foundation whatever for that allegation and Denis Faul never even tried to back it up with fact. I warned that the IRA would take it as a nod and a wink to say that they should take another swipe at the security forces. We know what happened: two RUC members and two of their friends were murdered while out on a wildfowling expedition and their families were left to suffer the results of those wild allegations against members of the security forces.

Recently we had a Rev. Burke from the United States pedalled in to speak at the Patrician hall, Carrickmore, in my constituency. At an open meeting he said, on behalf of Noraid, that the only legitimate army in Ireland was the IRA. Four members of the IRA appeared on the platform —two women in hoods and jackets, and two men in full IRA uniform. That did not happen somewhere in the backwoods. It happened in my constituency and a photograph appeared in the local paper, the *Ulster Herald*, on 10 August. Rev. Burke made those remarks in the midst of a terrorist campaign in which the innocents of that constituency had been slaughtered. Hon. Members who have protested so loudly would do well to take a trip to see Mr. Burke and ask him whether reconciliation is a theological term and was on his mind.

As the hon. Member for Hampshire, North-West (Sir D. Mitchell) said during the speech made by the Secretary of State, there is a shoot-to-kill policy in Northern Ireland —the shoot-to-kill policy of the IRA, whose members do not care about the suffering of their victims and their victims' families. They are happy without jury and without judge because they act as judge, jury and executioner rolled into one. Yet it seems that hon. Members are concerned about the introduction of effective measures against such people.

It will come as no surprise to the Secretary of State to hear that I do not believe that the present measures are effective. I welcome the existing provisions, but I do not believe that they go far enough. It is some time since we had an opportunity to discuss security. I have several times asked the Leader of the House for a debate on the necessity for extra security measures to deal with the terrorist onslaught on the innocent citizens of our Province. Unfortunately, I have to the report to the House that the campaign of terror continues unabated. This debate takes place at a time when the IRA murder gangs are able to run unhindered through my constituency and when the cycle of tit-for-tat murders is on the increase.

On behalf of my constituents and, I believe, of the vast majority of the people of Northern Ireland, I salute the dedication and bravery of the security forces, especially in areas such as my constituency where members of those forces are in the front line facing the terrorist attack. They face danger not only every time that they put on a uniform, but every time that they take their families out of the house or sit down to a meal. The men and women of the security forces—the Ulster Defence Regiment, the RUC, the RUCR and the Army—have shown not only discipline but bravery and dedication. All hon. Members should rise as one and support them without reservation because they are facing a merciless foe that does not care about the hurt or destruction that it brings upon members of the security forces or their families.

In recent months members of the security forces have made a tremendous sacrifice in the innocent blood of their colleagues. I fear that families are hurt not only by the fact that the terrorist campaign is still going on after 20 years, but because they feel that after a few hours their loved ones are only statistics. Another tragedy comes to take over the limelight and in a few hours loved ones are forgotten except by the members of the immediate family who feel the hurt. People in my constituency are now facing the winter months.

The other day I met the members of a community association in Castlederg, in my constituency. One of the elected representatives met me at the door and asked whether I had met one of my constituents, a young widow. That young woman was the first terrorist widow of 1990. She is left broken-hearted and desolate with her young children. She does not know what to do or where to go. She cannot stay where she is but does not want to move. She is left in turmoil after all the trauma, and it is her young children who keep her sane enough to have any purpose to go on. Standing outside that community association meeting at Castlederg, that elected representative said to me, "If you had been here a few moments ago you would have witnessed eight or nine members of the families of different members of the security forces." That was at 11 o'clock in the morning, and after taking their children to school those family members were coming from the graveyard. That goes on every day.

In our country widows are trying to come to terms with the tragedy, and as they seek to get over it another murder occurs and the wounds are reopened. Then someone

appears on television and cries against the treatment of some terrorist by the security forces. That grieves and hurts those widows even more.

Mr. Dicks: Would my hon. Friend like to comment on the poverty in which those families have to live and the difficulty of getting financial help from the Government? Would he like to comment on the low levels of compensation paid to those members of the forces who are injured in Northern Ireland?

Rev. William McCrea: I intended to raise that matter and this is a good moment to do it.

The other evening I went into a home in Cookstown where another member of the UDR had been murdered. Two leading members of the security forces were there offering sympathy to the widow. This was later on the day that her husband had been murdered. They were genuine in their offer of sympathy to the family. Albert Cooper, the man who was murdered, was a gentleman in every sense of the word. Mr. Cooper received a telephone call from a woman who asked him to fix the exhaust on her car. She said that she needed it urgently, and if he was kind enough to wait she would be there in 10 or 15 minutes. She asked him to wait because she had to go on an urgent call.

That gentleman waited at his garage. He looked at his watch the minute the lady turned into the driveway and said to his companion, "Do you see that, she is dead on time." The woman got out of the car, went into the office and looked into the face of that young father. She repeated her pathetic plea about how she needed the job done and would he be kind enough to do it. Then she left, but before she reached the street in Cookstown, a matter of 40 or 50 yards, Albert went to do the job, seeking to help, and he was blown to bits. A woman who under God was given the privilege of carrying a child and of giving birth was the very one used by the devil himself to take away an innocent man's life.

I sat in that widow's home with those two leading members of the security forces and we talked about certain people who were seen in the proximity of the murder and were noted for their terrorist connections. The family asked—and I have a room full of people to confirm this—why those persons could not be held if they were under suspicion. The senior officer said, "If I kept them overnight on suspicion only, they would take me to court and the court would award them £3,000."

Young Darryl McKeown, a teenage lad in Maghera, came out with his dad from work and sat down in the car beside him. His dad did an ordinary day's job as a butcher in a shop. The terrorists watched Mr. McKeown and his child come out and then riddled the car with bullets. The young lad had to fall to the floor and he watched as his father was slaughtered in front of his eyes. The authorities offered him £3,000 for the trauma and the tragedy, the same amount that that senior officer said that suspected terrorists would get for spending one night in a cell. That answers the question asked by the hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks).

The value of life in our Province is low and that has been proved by some of the points made by hon. Members. The life of a terrorist or of a person who is suspected of the most heinous and foul crimes is more important than the life of a victim. What is the use of weeping? Four men are lying dead, two of them in the car and one on the floor or on the ground and one in the water down at the lough shore. That is the reality, but it goes further because some people face a living death.

A few days ago I received a communication which I shall read because the House should hear it. I wish that more hon. Members were present to hear it. It is entitled, "Far Across Yonder Blue Lies a Golden Fairy Land". The words of this beautiful song were sung to a hushed and enthralled audience as the singer unfolded to his friends the beauty of Northern Ireland. He went on to sing another haunting ballad beginning, "If you ever go across the sea to Ireland, then maybe at the closing of the day"; then comes the lovely line: "and watch the sun go down on Galway bay." The person who wrote to me about this incident continued: "I had to leave the room. The singer's face was shining as he sang. He stood tall and proud, yet his sightless eyes and hearing aid told it all. Charlie was blown up 16 years ago while serving with the RUC. This winter, he will make soft toys in his dark and silent world. His friend Willie was more fortunate. He can at least hear." What was he singing? It was, "and watch the sun go down on Galway bay". He would never see the sun go down on Galway bay again.

Sean heard someone knocking on his door 19 years ago. He looked out of the window and part of his brain fell out on the cot where his infant son lay because he had been shot in the head. Today, he is wheelchair bound, totally dependent on his elderly parents. He needs constant nursing care. Another lad was a Royal Marine, a tough one. Today, he sits in a red wheelchair with 11 bullets in his stomach. A surgical collar and sling complete his ensemble. He was only doing his duty outside the law courts, protecting the public.

Another gentleman got into the back of his car after duty and was hurled through the roof by a bomb. Today, he sits in a blue wheelchair wearing a corset to support what is left of his anatomy. Michael lost two arms. He is in his late twenties. Many things are difficult with iron hooks or claws. This is not fiction; this is reality. Another was a human fireball in Londonderry after a petrol bomb struck him on the back. Another carries more steel plates in his head than many of us see in a lifetime. His epilepsy does not help matters.

Those people are still living. I ask the House to think carefully about rejecting a Bill that is aimed at curbing the freedom of the terrorist because it would be wrong to do that. I have already said that I do not think that the Bill goes far enough, but, while we curb the freedom of the terrorist, we are giving the innocent at least a chance.

I have been a Member of Parliament for eight years and I believe that I can honestly say that in those eight years I have walked behind the coffins of more of my constituents than has any other Member of Parliament. The tragedy is that, in the last year, that has continued. We hear a lot of cries whenever we suggest that there should be a return of capital punishment. I say without apology that I believe that the Government should bring it in. If anybody needs any proof that the terrorists are afraid of capital punishment, they should think about Ellis last week.

Ellis was on hunger strike in the south because he believed that he could pull it off. They shipped him over here to the United Kingdom—I think that the Irish Government thought that he would die and they wanted to give the British Government the problem—and his sister said on television that he would starve to death now that he was in the United Kingdom because he had no reason

[Rev. William McCrea]

to live and because he would get no justice here. No sooner were the words out of her than he came off the hunger strike because he knew that he would have been allowed to die. The one thing that the terrorists fear more than anything else is death, and probably what comes after it as well—they have every reason to fear that. That is why I trust that the day will soon come when the Government have the guts to grasp this nettle, in the interests of the innocent, and reintroduce capital punishment.

I asked a leading member of the security forces who was standing outside the yard of Albert Cooper, "Can you please tell me when this will end?" His telling answer was, "Not in the next 20 years if we carry on with the policy that we have at the moment." I defy anybody to disprove that statement in the closing moments of my speech, or call it what Members like—I do not care how it is written up or what anyone says afterwards. At least when I walk into my constituency, the people there will know one thing. I might not have what others have, but I love my constituents with something that is in my heart, not just in my mind. I am begging for the lives of my constituents.

I ask any hon. Member—I ask the Minister who is replying to the debate—what answer I should give to Mrs. Cooper, Mrs. Jamieson and Mrs. Kilpatrick and their children when they ask me when the terrorist campaign will end. The Prime Minister said that she believed that the terrorists should be wiped off the face of the earth. All that the terrorists have to do is to come over the border from Haughey's territory in the south. It cannot be disproved that the vast majority of attacks in Mid-Ulster are the result of terrorists coming over the border from the south, doing their dastardly deed and going back to the safe haven of the Irish Republic, while Ministers were telling me about state co-operation. Not one terrorist crime committed by the IRA in my constituency has been solved.

Will the Bill assure the Province that the terrorist will be wiped off the face of the earth? If the Minister can promise me that, I should like him to go further: how long do we have to wait, and how many more coffins do we have to carry down the road, before the day of peace comes?

7.30 pm

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): The hon. Member for Mid-Ulster (Rev. William McCrea) has spoken of the feelings and suffering of the victims of terrorism with a passion which is driven by his long experience of ministering to that suffering. I know that we all understand, though he may feel that we do not always do so, the extent of that suffering, even if we do not have the privilege of living in Northern Ireland, which, as he and the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) emphasised, is part of the United Kingdom.

These debates give us the opportunity to remember especially those who have died only because, in their working lives, they sought to keep the peace and the law, or because they were merely friends of those who sought to do that in Northern Ireland. The brutality of those deaths is exceeded only by the futility of those who killed them. That futility is demonstrated, in my view, by the continuation of the violence, which in itself is evidence of the lack of achievement of any credible objective.

I am strongly opposed to capital punishment. I do not want to enter into the argument in detail, but in my professional life as a lawyer I have represented someone who spent 16 years in prison for a murder that he did not commit, of which he was wrongly convicted and in respect of which he was later released.

I believe strongly that repression of opinion is wrong. I am against any form of political repression. I have to say, however, that people of liberal and libertarian views such as myself are driven to the brink of those views by the sort of incidents to which the hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble) referred, involving the deaths of four men who went out on a day's wildfowling. We do not go over the brink, because of our desire for democracy and our beliefs that people can eventually trust one another if only they have the confidence to do so and that the objective of reconciliation—I use the word advisedly in the context of the debate—is achievable.

As a citizen of the United Kingdom on this side of the water, I believe that I express the view of the great majority of the citizens of the United Kingdom when I say that I find the sneering of the hon. Member for Antrim, North at "reconciliation" as a secular concept both distasteful and disturbing. Reconciliation happens between husbands and wives, brothers and sisters, neighbours and communities. I believe that the vast majority of the population of the United Kingdom—the United Kingdom of the hon. Member for Antrim, North—find the hon. Gentleman's theology to be specious and but a disguise for what sometimes appears to be, though clothed in great eloquence, an antipathy towards the ordinary understanding that people have of the meaning of reconciliation.

My right hon. and hon. Friends and I recognise the continuing need for what is described, rightly or wrongly, as emergency provisions legislation for Northern Ireland. If the House divides this evening, we shall be supporting the Government. This type of legislation is not desirable, but it is a reality of life and we must recognise the need for most, if not all, of the new provisions.

I think that the House should place great value on the tremendous work that has been done by Viscount Colville of Culross, whose repeated analyses of the situation in Northern Ireland, and clear expression of his opinion of it, have given hon. Members who have bothered to read his reports a much greater understanding than certainly that for which the hon. Member for Mid-Ulster will ever give us credit. I wish to pay tribute also to the work that has been done by the Standing Advisory Council on Human Rights, which has made a considerable contribution to the debate and has ensured that the matters that it raises are always considered on as objective a basis as possible.

Ms. Mildred Gordon (Bow and Poplar): I am sure that the hon. and learned Gentleman will agree that Parliament has a duty to consider legislation, to prevent terrorism and to maintain the rights and liberties of individuals. Is he aware that in the past six years almost 7,000 people have been detained at ports and airports under legislation that has related to Irish political violence, and that 86·4 per cent. of those detained have not been charged? This means that thousands of innocent people have been stopped. Is he aware that in the past 10 years inquiries made by ports and airports to the national drugs unit at Scotland yard have increased more than twofold and that the number of people stopped and examined for more than an hour at our ports and airports has increased fivefold in the past five years, and is increasing? Does he agree that Parliament

must consider the impact of these happenings on civil liberties and ensure that a balance is struck when considering legislation of the sort that is before us?

Mr. Carlile: The hon. Lady has only recently wandered into the debate and it is obvious that she has not read the Bill. Her intervention has nothing to do with the debate and I think that you would rule me out of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if I attempted to respond to the issues that she raised, which would require a complex and detailed reply.

I was about to say to the Secretary of State that, although I have indicated the broad general support of my right hon. and hon. Friends for the Bill, some major disappointments arise from it. The first disappointment, which has already been mentioned, is the retention of the power to introduce internment. I join the Alliance party of Northern Ireland in its argument that the power is unacceptable, impracticable and contrary to all the best advice, including that of Viscount Colville of Culross. I wish to put on record the strength of view held by Viscount Colville. At paragraph 11.9 of his report he stated:

"The detention of thousands of Palestinians without charge or trial by the Israeli authorities in connection with the intifada appears to have been carried out under powers not dissimilar to what is in the EPA."

That is the emergency provisions Act. He added:

"It would be ironic for the UK to have to explain that its much cherished legal system is so liberal that it has proved inept to bring to trial and convict known criminals, and that it is an excess of fairness which now predicates executive detention as coming to our society's rescue."

He comes to this conclusion:

"As things now stand I can only endorse with vigour Sir George Baker's recommendation: no more detention."

As Viscount Colville suggested in another part of the section of his report to which I have referred, whether to retain or remove the power to introduce internment is a political decision, and I understand that it is a difficult one. It is a matter of judgment and not of absolutes. I suggest to the Government that the judgment that has been made is wrong and that it is impossible to imagine circumstances in which internment would be likely to be introduced. It will continue to rankle as a political matter until it is removed. The advice of Sir George Baker and Lord Colville is the best advice on this subject.

The introduction of the video-taping of interviews in terrorist trials would provide both proper protection for the rights of suspects and proof of the reality of confessions. Currently, the inquiry under Sir John May is considering the case of the Guildford Four. Many people, including myself, who have submitted memoranda of evidence to the inquiry have argued for the introduction of video-taping of interviews for certain serious crimes in England and Wales. We do not yet know what view Sir John will take, but, if it were introduced throughout the United Kingdom, including Northern Ireland, it would take away a substantial area of controversy in trials that reach the higher criminal courts.

I have practised for almost 20 years in the criminal courts, and I have experienced the advantages of the tape-recording of interviews—the difference that is made to trials and the narrowing of the issues. I urge the Secretary of State to reconsider the matter. The video-taping of interviews would remove the controversy surrounding disputed confessions. They would either be true confessions or they would not and it would be possible to ascertain that from the video tape.

The Secretary of State referred to clause 29. If such a clause had been included in the Criminal Justice Bill for England and Wales, those of us who are intimately concerned in such matters would have had a fit. It is a draconian measure. I understand the thinking behind it, but I am concerned about the applicability of that new offence to the inside of a suspect's home. All sorts of examples have been given. I do not know whether marzipan can be used in the making of explosives, although that is certainly a schoolboy myth which I have carried through my life—at least, until today. It raises the spectre of a housewife in Northern Ireland suddenly being arrested and having to discharge the burden of proof—which is shifted to her—that the marzipan was kept merely to make the Christmas cake.

I noted that when Lord Colville suggested the introduction of an offence along those lines, he clearly did not have in mind a maximum sentence of 10 years imprisonment. In paragraph 2.10 of his report, he suggested that the offence required only a relatively minor penalty. I should be interested to know why the Government have decided that the offence should go rather wide of what he had in mind and attract, on indictment, a very substantial maximum.

In chapter 5 of the report, Lord Colville suggests the introduction of an ombudsman to deal with complaints, especially with those against the police, which would bring about a welcome and increased level of confidence. I invite the Minister to say why the Government have rejected that idea. I note that the Secretary of State is shaking his head. Perhaps the Minister could say why such an ombudsman is not yet being introduced to provide that increased level of confidence. It would be inexpensive, but it could have a considerable effect on the public's view of their rights of complaint to someone outside the police force about the actions of the police. It is important that people outside the force deal with complaints against the force. I argued that during the passage of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, as did others. We still argue for the introduction of a police ombudsman for England and Wales.

The hon. Member for Upper Bann suggested that we should look at the Diplock courts. I have done so. There is no doubt that, whether or not they are desirable, the Diplock courts are fair. I had the opportunity to discuss the trial procedures with the judiciary and others, and concluded that the courts lean over backwards to ensure that wrongful convictions are not entered, that reasons are given for everything—which is more than can be said for the courts of England and Wales—and that evidence is analysed with a fine-toothed comb.

Mr. Flannery: I have previously raised that matter. No matter how fair the hon. and learned Gentleman's observation has revealed the Diplock courts to be, does he agree that they exist only because of the position in Northern Ireland? I hope that he is not advocating such courts for mainland Britain.

Mr. Carlile: I agree with the hon. Gentleman. I was simply developing my argument.

The Diplock courts are fair. We should pay tribute to the judges in Northern Ireland, who operate in the most appalling personal conditions. By taking appointments as judges, their private lives and those of their families are ruined. They face the permanent risk of being murdered

[Mr. Carlile]

—and we know that there have been murders among the judiciary. I pay a strong tribute to those brave people who accept jobs as judges in Northern Ireland.

The Diplock courts are undoubtedly an exception to the ordinary rules of jurisprudence applied in the United Kingdom. I do not share the view that they should be introduced in England and Wales, because I believe that the jury system works. It has been criticised on many grounds, but it is a constitutional safeguard. Anyone who has doubts about the importance of the safeguard provided by a jury should think about those cases in which juries have refused to convict on what have turned out historically—and this goes back for centuries—to be grounds that have proved later to be right.

I accept that there is no option other than the retention of the Diplock courts, or something like them, in Northern Ireland for the time being; although I think that I am right in saying that the Government share the aspiration to reintroduce jury trial at the earliest possible opportunity. The use of the Diplock courts could be mitigated by Lord Colville's suggestion of increased certifying-in of cases. It could also be mitigated by the use of multi-judge courts, although I recognise that that might be impracticable at present. I suggest a minor alteration to the system that would make it appear to be even fairer than it now appears to be.

I propose the introduction of pre-trial reviews before a judge other than the ultimate trial judge, when questions about the admissibility of evidence—for example, a confession—or discussion on points of law that might have a prejudicial effect on the defendant could be raised. Judges are accustomed to directing themselves to ignore what they have just heard. Any of us who have ever sat in a judicial capacity have had to do that. It is not easy, but with experience it no doubt becomes easier—and that may be why Diplock judges do it well. However, for public peace of mind and the protection of civil liberties, the simple, albeit time-consuming, alteration that I suggest could be useful.

All of us in the House look for and offer solutions, but in the end the real solution is in the hands of the terrorists. That solution will come only when they realise that the vast majority of people—probably 99 per cent.—want to live in peace and want those terrorists to lay down their arms.

7.51 pm

Mr. David Davis (Boothferry): As an English Member of Parliament, it is with some trepidation that I speak in the debate—not for any constitutional reason, because I view the constituents of all right hon. and hon. Members as every bit as British as my own. But perhaps the one thing that unites the hon. Members for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon), for Mid-Ulster (Rev. William McCrea), for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) and for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble) is that they live through and suffer the pain of the consequences of terrorism at first hand, whereas the rest of us merely read or hear about them, or see them on television. We do not have to face those consequences day in, day out, through the years. Some of the speeches made today give eloquent testimony to the pain that is caused to the hon. Members who represent constituencies in that tragically torn Province.

The hon. Member for Upper Bann referred to the speech of the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara), in which he spoke of the move away from the rule of law in applying the provisions of the Bill. He was speaking of the conventional view of the civil rights basis of British law, which is best encapsulated in the statement that it is better that 10 guilty men go free than that one innocent man be wrongfully imprisoned. Today we heard about the consequences of one guilty man going free, in that it can lead to 10 innocent men being wrongfully killed.

The scales of justice are difficult to balance in such a trade-off. The stance taken by the Opposition today tipped that balance very much against the interests of the victim and, sadly, in favour of the terrorists. Such a stance might be appropriate in the mainland society in which we live, but not for a society riven by evil organisations, such as Northern Ireland.

Mr. Jim Marshall (Leicester, South): I am surprised to hear the hon. Gentleman say that, and only regret that my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) cannot be here to speak for himself. My hon. Friend made it clear that Labour's policy offers no succour to terrorists. It is that any deviations from the law as it applies in the rest of the United Kingdom must be justified. We do not suggest that there should be no deviations, but that if there are changes from the generality of the law as enforced in the United Kingdom, they must be justified.

Mr. Davis: I am also sorry that the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North is not in his place, because we are constituency neighbours and we usually have great respect for one another. I could deal clause by clause with some of the points that he made, but frankly I do not think that he understood them. One, dealing with the important issue of evidence, is particularly important, but I shall return to that.

The attack on terrorism can be placed into three categories. First, there are the political initiatives to take away the grounds for discontent that provide a breeding ground for terrorism. Secondly, there is direct action, much of which is encapsulated in the Bill, by the police and security forces. Thirdly, there are indirect actions, having the aim of strangulating terrorism. The best example of that in previous legislation was denying the oxygen of publicity to terrorist organisations. More recently, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has taken several legislative and executive initiatives to deny terrorist organisations funds in the form of income from racketeering. That is a major advance and should be commended.

Each of those policies and strategies has a down side. While there can be no doubt about the need for political initiatives, their very existence offers some hope to republicans, who may think that, one day, they will get their own way and that they become more plausible. One must live with that down side. Similarly, even in the best-run military operations relating to terrorism, mistakes are made, which may occasionally create problems that help to recruit supporters for terrorist organisations.

Anyone who has witnessed a detailed house-to-house search will know that, however careful may be the people who carry it out, it is never a pleasant process for the

families who are on the receiving end. The individual who has had his house searched is bound to feel some grievance, so there is a down side to even the most legitimate and carefully executed operation undertaken by the military or security forces.

I join the hon. Member for Mid-Ulster and other hon. Members in acknowledging what a difficult job the security forces perform and how well they have undertaken it in difficult and unpleasant circumstances over a long period. I add my congratulations to them on that. It occurs to me that indirect attacks on terrorism have less of a down side. It is difficult to see how anyone could be martyred by having his accounts properly scrutinised, or how antagonism could be created by the administrative aspects of the work against racketeering. That is an area on which more emphasis should be placed. My right hon. Friend has done much in that connection already, but we should debate further what we can and should do to defeat terrorist racketeering.

In concentrating on IRA racketeering, I do not underestimate its other forms; the Provisional IRA has business operations that produce about £5 million a year. The income comes from black cabs, drinking clubs, smuggling, protection—from all types of illegal activity in Northern Ireland, and sadly from some legitimate activities. By raising about £5 million a year, the Provisional IRA, its allies and opponents do about £500 million worth of damage to Northern Ireland each year. I do not count the grief, misery, death and destruction that we have already heard about; merely the economic and public cost. Every £1 raised does £100 worth of damage. On those grounds alone we ought to consider the importance of our strategy to deal with racketeering and of increasing the resources devoted to it. That is not to say that funding should be reduced in other areas, because all the work that we do is essential, but we must emphasise the work required and support it.

It is also worth considering what the IRA achieves in nationalist communities in west Belfast and elsewhere through the existence of such commercial operations. It is difficult for an English Member of Parliament who does not come from the Province or live there, but I have tried to imagine what life must be like for a young Catholic in his teens growing up in west Belfast. If he goes for a drink, where does he go? There are no pubs, so he goes to a republican drinking club. By passing money across the bar he inadvertently contributes to the Provisional IRA. He is surrounded by the symbols of militant republicanism when he does so. If he travels, he goes by black cab, and contributes to the IRA. If he buys a "black" video, he contributes to the IRA. If he wants to get a job, where does he go? In many cases the local IRA chieftain has the patronage to give him work on building sites. If he wants housing advice or to know how to get housing benefit, he will go to a Provisional Sinn Fein advice centre, which is probably paid for out of IRA funds raised by the methods that I mentioned.

In the worst cases, the young man might know someone in his street who is a prisoner and whose family get a pension from the Provisional IRA. It is not difficult to imagine how any young man in those circumstances—surrounded by anti-British, sectarian propaganda, his life permeated by all those tentacles of Provisional IRA activity—can easily be seduced into the organisation, into its line of thinking and the type of action that it tries to encourage. As a result, it is hardly surprising to hear that very young IRA members have been captured in the past few months.

Therefore, it is critical that the Northern Ireland Office does several things about racketeering. Any action that it takes must be quick. The Provisional IRA and other terrorist organisations—either independently or by mimicry—have proved innovative when it comes to raising money. Some other methods that I did not mention, which are used south of the border, include selling illegal hormones for agriculture and smuggling. As one closes down one operation, another is opened up to provide more money for terrorism, as we have witnessed in the past few years.

Any policy that we decide upon to try to improve the situation, as opposed to nibbling at the edges or keeping things as they are now, must quickly make inroads into such activities. It will require more than one method—more than mere legislation in the House. Such policy needs to be comprehensive and to deal with several areas of activity at the same time. Because of those requirements, the policy will also have to encompass social action, legislation such as the Bill and other Acts, and action at European level so that European directives can be used to prevent such commercial activities evading us by crossing borders.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has to consider several issues. Another problem is that any action taken has to be watertight. One of the best examples of non-watertight action was the Government's attempt to cut off the oxygen of publicity. This week, "Panorama" on BBC television carried pictures of known terrorists with actors' voices dubbed over them to get round the legislation. That makes a mockery of our policies. We must ensure that other policies do not fall down because of such loopholes, technical or otherwise.

There are two ways in which the Bill does not go far enough. I am not a lawyer, I cannot be sure that what I have to say is accurate, but I hope that the Secretary of State will give this matter some attention in Committee. First, clause 22 allows the search for and acquisition of documents for evidence, within the limits of clause 30—in other words, documents that will be used to further terrorism. I understand why it is unimportant that a limitation should be placed upon that right. However, documentary evidence will become more and more important, especially in indirect ways, to stop terrorism. For example, it would be a tragedy if a search turned up documents, but because the search was under a warrant constructed under the Bill, and the documents were relevant to the section in the prevention of terrorism Act that aims to prevent the funding of terrorism, the action failed. We may have created a lacuna because of the way that the Bill is drafted. While I am conscious of the issue of the limitation of powers, that loophole should be considered in Committee.

The second matter that the Bill does not cover—I know that it will raise hackles on the Opposition Benches because of civil rights—is the use of information collected by telephone tapping. At the moment we are able to intercept communications in Northern Ireland under legally and administratively constrained arrangements. Such information is not allowed in a court of law. It seems to me that it is no more of an infringement of civil liberties to allow such information to be used in a court of law than to gather it in the first place. Therefore, I should like that

[Mr. Davis]

to be included in the Bill. The key distinguishing factor of law and order in Northern Ireland is the problem of intimidation of juries and witnesses. Therefore, other forms of evidence are critical, and any form of evidence that can help us save lives is worth considering.

We must recognise that mistakes can cost lives. We recognise that intellectually, and several hon. Members who represent the Province have told us about the pain, misery and suffering that can arise from such errors. We do not take that lightly. I see that the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North has now returned to the Chamber. None of us takes lightly the trade-off with civil rights, but civil rights are being played against lives. We must always keep that in our minds, and with that in mind I have much pleasure in commending the Bill to the House.

8.9 pm

Mr. Ken Maginnis (Fermanagh and South Tyrone): The hon. Member for Boothferry (Mr. Davis) expressed some reservations about daring to speak on a matter pertaining to Northern Ireland. Having listened to him, I believe that his sympathy and understanding and the practical way in which he dealt with the issue have singled him out as one who should speak more often on this subject. I appreciate his contribution.

As I live in Northern Ireland, I must inevitably welcome the Bill, not because I want there to be a need for emergency legislation, but because I recognise that, without it, we will be even worse off than we are today.

I regret having to make my next point, because I have some respect for the Secretary of State and for the way in which he has tried to address our problems, but, having welcomed the legislation, I must now express my deep reservations about some comments that he has published about the Bill. They are almost a paradox, because the right hon. Gentleman began by saying:

"It is the Government's duty to ensure that the law is effective for that purpose"

—that purpose is dealing with terrorism. However, he later stated:

"The Bill does not represent any change in our security policy."

That appears to be a total contradiction, especially when one considers that, in 1985, the number of deaths from terrorism had dropped to 47, but has now risen to 84 and that the figure for this year is still much in excess of the figure for 1985. We do not want no change; we want effective change.

I do not want to quote all the Secretary of State's comments, but I believe that he chose the wrong word when he said:

"The Government believes that, taken as a whole, the Bill represents an appropriate response to the current terrorist threat".

The word that I doubt is "appropriate". What does the Secretary of State mean by "appropriate"? Does he mean "appropriate" purely in political terms, in terms of how the handling of the affair by the Government of Northern Ireland might be seen in Great Britain or the United States? Like many other hon. Members, I should have preferred the right hon. Gentleman to use the word "adequate" and to talk about "an adequate response", because, despite the best efforts of our security forces and despite the endurance of the vast majority of the law-abiding community, this legislation, as the Secretary of State interprets it, is unlikely to contain let alone eradicate terrorism.

The House has had the benefit of listening to my hon. Friend the Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble), who spoke about the emergency provisions legislation from the legal viewpoint. It is not for me to follow several other hon. Members who have indulged more in philosophical arguments than in practical arguments about the legislation. It is right that the philosophy of the way in which we deal with terrorism should be addressed, but for those of us who live in Northern Ireland there is an urgency about this. There is a practical sense and a reality which, at times, becomes impatient with those who indulge solely in the philosophical debate.

I can best illustrate what I mean by reminding the House of exactly what terrorism means in Northern Ireland in stark terms. I shall take the period of exactly five years from 15 November 1985 to 14 November this year. In those five years we have had the Anglo-Irish Agreement —some would tell us that we have had the benefits of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, but others would tell the truth. During that time there have been 347 murders—an average murder rate per year that is almost exactly 50 per cent. higher than the murder rate in 1985. Of those 347 murders——

Mr. Brooke *rose*——

Mr. Maginnis: If the Secretary of State will allow me to finish, I shall certainly give way to him later.

Of those 347 murders, 259, or 74·6 per cent. were carried out by republican terror groups, 83, or 23·9 per cent., were carried out by loyalist terror groups and [illegible] are attributed to a person or persons unknown. Of the victims, 119 have been Roman Catholics, and 49, or 41·2 per cent., of those Roman Catholics have been killed by republican paramilitary groups; 68, or 57·1 per cent., of the Roman Catholic victims were killed by loyalists; and the murders of two of the victims, or 1·1 per cent., were attributed to a person or persons unknown. Among the 228 Protestant victims, the deaths of 210, or 92·1 per cent., of them are attributable to republican terrorism; 15, or 6·6 per cent., are attributable to loyalist terror groups and three, or 1·3 per cent., are attributed to persons unknown.

I know that statistics can be boring, but I should like to complete them before setting them to one side. I remind the House of what has happened year by year since 1985 in terms of terrorist killings. I advise the Secretary of State, to whom I shall give way shortly, that I am dealing in Anglo-Irish Agreement years—that is, from 15 November one year to 14 November the next year. In 1985, before the agreement was signed, there were 47 terrorist murders. In 1986, that had risen to 59. In 1987, it had risen to 80 and in 1988 the number was 84. In 1989 the figure dropped to 54. Although that figure was still much too high, we were grateful for that temporary and partial respite. However, in the past year, the figure has risen again, to 70. I shall deal later with why the figure dropped in 1989 because there is a lesson to be learned from that, but I give way first to the Secretary of State.

Mr. Brooke: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way. I simply wonder whether, later in his speech, he will dwell on the coincidence of the years that he is quoting to the period during which the Provisional IRA has been heavily armed by Gaddafi of Libya.

Mr. Maginnis: I shall endeavour to address that point later for the benefit of the Secretary of State.

I should like to ask the Secretary of State a question. Who will protect the people of Northern Ireland? The answer may seem simple, but I ask the question because I do not believe that over the years the Government have taken adequate steps, in terms of active and practical measures, to deal with the continued suffering of the people who live in Northern Ireland. I refer not just to those who live in Northern Ireland. There are those in Great Britain who have also become the IRA's victims. In the light of the events of the past year, one should include, too, those throughout Europe who have suffered at the hands of the same organisation.

It may seem to be trite, but it is not meant to be, when I say that we know that the RUC, the Regular Army and the Ulster Defence Regiment, to which I pay the greatest compliment for its endurance and courage, will endeavour to protect us. If, however, one deals separately with each of those services, we know that each has to carry out its duty under constraints that ought not to be imposed upon it. We accept that our security services must abide by the rule of law, but other things could be done and other steps could be taken to make their role more effective and to provide them with more protection.

During the last few years, the RUC has experienced greater and greater difficulty in operating within its financial budget. That makes itself manifest in various ways, not least when a policeman in Armagh was shot through the window of his own home because no one had ensured that a simple, effective and not very costly method of protecting him was installed—adequate window glazing to hinder the firing of a gun at him. When I found out that that had not been done, I wrote immediately to the Northern Ireland Office and asked that steps should be taken to examine the safety of RUC members and properly to assess the likelihood, according to the areas in which they live, of their being assassinated. Before anything was done, however, yet another policeman in the same area was shot in exactly the same way.

I do not believe that senior RUC officers are oblivious to the needs of the men whom they command, but it is so difficult to provide protection that at times they adopt a fingers-crossed attitude. The RUC man is the most vulnerable. He has to carry out the ordinary civil duties of a policeman. I hope that this place will recognise his security needs. I do not intend to dwell for too long on the subject; I recognise the difficulties that the Regular Army faces. It is within the Government's competence to deal with those difficulties. Not least among them is the gross undermanning of Army units for the tasks that they have to carry out close to the frontier.

I have said to the Secretary of State before, and I say to him again, please do not ask the commander on the ground how he is getting on, knowing that the commander believes that he must give an answer of which the Secretary of State will approve. I ask him, please, to go and decide what the task is and then to ask the commander how many men he has to carry out that task. I also ask the Secretary of State to question the commander on how he allocates men to do the job. The Secretary of State and the Minister of State would soon understand the total inadequacy of the manpower in those areas.

If I have more sympathy for one security service rather than another, it must be for the Ulster Defence Regiment, not just because I served in the regiment for a considerable number of years, but because I find that its members are subjected, even by people who are not pro-IRA, to aggravation, false accusation and allegations that would never stand up in a court of law but which are repeated again and again until they begin to wear the men down. That is what the allegations are intended to do: To undermine the morale of soldiers, particularly the part-time members of the Ulster Defence Regiment.

What are the allegations? They are of the most spurious type: that a member of the UDR has been rude to someone on the road or that a UDR member has been aggressive or threatening on the road. Each allegation has to be, and is, fully investigated. Just imagine what that does to a man who, after doing a day's work, goes out to do eight hours duty with the UDR and who comes in at 4 am to find that perhaps at around midnight someone drove up to the gate of his barracks and put in a complaint which the Special Investigation Branch has been asked to investigate. That man wants to get home and have three or four hours sleep before commencing his next day's work, but he is asked to stay behind because he has to be interrogated by the SIB.

Could it be that after almost 12 years' service in the UDR I am blind to its faults, that I do not know what goes on or, to put it bluntly, that I am prejudiced in how I see the men with whom I served? That can best be illustrated if I say that my battalion, the 8th battalion of the UDR, has had 33 of its members murdered by the IRA. As I look at those 33 names—God knows, that is enough—I see that they must represent a broad cross-section of those who served in the UDR. I ask myself then about people such as George Shaw who took me, as an 11-year-old lad, to my first scout camp. He served the community, and for all his 57 years he was a public-spirited man. I ask myself, too, about Eric Shiells, a business man. He was a person with liberal views who employed people from both sections of the community. I ask about Cormac McCabe, the headmaster of a secondary school, and I ask myself about Albert Cooper, who was referred to earlier today. I taught him at school. Then there is Jimmy Johnston, whom I also taught at school. I ask myself about Denis Wilson. I cast my eye across my constituency and see so many of those faces. I challenge anyone with an iota of honesty to tell me whether any of those 33 people, of whom I have named but a few, was ever known to adopt aggressive behaviour towards any member of the community, Roman Catholic or Protestant. That is how I ask people to judge. They should not do what so many of the UDR's critics do and consider the regiment as uniforms with no faces and no bodies. I challenge members of the Social Democratic and Labour party, members of the Labour party, members of the Roman Catholic Church and members of the Irish Government, who seem all too ready to criticise the UDR first to look at the cases of those who have served and died as they stood between the community and those who would bring it to its knees. Then they should make a judgment.

When does the Secretary of State intend to find a way of calling to account those who make false allegations against members of the security forces? It is right that the public should be protected. I support the protection of the public against anyone who goes to excess, but I expect exactly the same protection to be accorded to people in the security services.

Schedule 2 contains a list of those who are proscribed by the legislation. Recently, there has been a debate in Northern Ireland about whether the Ulster Defence

[Mr. Maginnis]

Association should be proscribed. I do not give a hoot about any illegal or paramilitary—I suppose that I had better call them that—organisations being proscribed. The Secretary of State may proscribe the UDA tomorrow and I and my colleagues will shed no tears. We do not want to see our Roman Catholic neighbours gunned down any more than we want to see our Protestant constituents bear the onslaught which they have endured for the past 20 years. But those who call for the proscription of the UDA are somewhat hypocritical. This year, there has been an upsurge in the number of killings by loyalist paramilitaries from about 20 per cent. to almost 30 per cent. But why have those people who ask for the proscription of the UDA not considered how 92 per cent. of Protestants killed during the past five years were victims of the IRA and indirectly, or sometimes directly, by its political wing, Sinn Fein? Why do those people not call for the proscription of Sinn Fein?

My party will support the proscription of any organisation on either side of the community that is engaged in violence against the community. We should be fools not to do so. I hope that the Secretary of State or the Minister of State will answer a question. Is the reason why the UDA is not proscribed, that no one is prepared to face up to the need to proscribe Sinn Fein? Many of us fear that that is the case. If it is, the Government's policy is less than honourable.

Lord Colville suggested that the power of internment —I am not afraid to call it that, because I know that it is and what I want it to be—should be removed from the legislation. I am glad that the Government did not do so, if only because it would have sent out the wrong signal to the IRA. But I wish that those who talk about internment would begin to ask why we need it and examine its historical background. They should ask what it is. We need it because only 8 to 10 per cent. of IRA terrorists are brought to justice through the courts—I refer to those who commit actual murders. I do not suggest for a moment that bringing 55 or 60 per cent. of loyalist killers to justice is good enough, but there is a difference. That is a reason why we need internment.

Some people make a glib excuse and say, "Look at what happened in 1971. Look how the community was alienated." But in 1971 the community was alienated for other reasons. It felt that it was socially underprivileged and that it had a considerable amount of ground to make up. But surely after 20 years neither the Secretary of State nor anyone else will tell me that a section of the community in Northern Ireland, which lives under exactly the same Government as the rest of the community, administered from Westminster, is still underprivileged or still has the perception—that is an important word to that section of the community—that its people are second-class citizens.

Internment did not work in 1971 because it was used to some extent, if not entirely for political purposes. I forget the exact number, but between 300 and 400 people were hauled in one after another. There was no real basis for selection.

We must remember that internment is not retribution. Retribution is exacted through the judicial procedure and the courts. Internment is a means of detaining those who cannot be brought to justice through the judicial system, either because people are not willing to come to court to give evidence or because the security forces need to protect valuable sources of information simply to keep themselves alive. It is, and must be seen only as a means of disrupting the command and control structure of paramilitary organisations.

I challenge people, such as the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon), who criticise the legislation to answer a question. What will they do to protect their Protestant constituents and, indeed, the 41 per cent. of victims of violence killed by the IRA who were Roman Catholic? What suggestions do they make? Unless hon. Members have positive and practical suggestions to make about how to deal with terrorism, they have not earned the right to criticise what we endeavour to do this evening.

I challenge not only the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh, but every Member of the SDLP. I challenge the Roman Catholic Church and I do it with respect. I challenge the Irish Republic and I do it with respect, but I ask them, "How long will you maintain your harsh, uncompromising, irredentist attitude to Northern Ireland in terms of articles 2 and 3 of your constitution?" Meantime, the Government must reason out why they have retained internment. I hope that it is not just so that we do not give a wrong signal to the IRA, because, by that very constraint, we give a wrong signal.

Our emergency legislation does not deal effectively with those who choose to use the ballot box and Armalite philosophy. They are those who seek election to our district councils. The hon. Member for Mid-Ulster (Rev. William McCrea) and my hon. Friend the Member for Antrim, East (Mr. Beggs) and I are forced to sit with killers. Recently I was accused of gloating over the shooting of an ex-member of my council, one Martin McCaughey. I do not gloat over the death of anyone. I repudiate the allegation. Because I am concerned for the law-abiding members of my community, I am satisfied when he is brought to justice and prevented from continuing his killings in my constituency.

What are members of district councils who are constitutional politicians and who support law and order to do when we are forced to sit with those who, while they face us across the chamber, conspire to kill us and members of the community whom we represent? The time when Martin McCaughey was shot was an opportune time for the Government to say, "Here we have adequate proof. Now is the moment for selective internment."

I am pleased that the legislation is being strengthened in terms of what can be achieved in closing some frontier crossings. I recall a story told, not by a Unionist, but by an SDLP member of my council when a Sinn Fein member brought a resolution condemning the closure of cross-border roads on the basis that it was a social, economic and political constraint. The SDLP member asked the Sinn Fein councillor whether he had worked that argument out and recalled the day when Tyrone reached the final of the all-Ireland Gaelic football championship. The people from round Dungannon intended to cross from Aughnacloy towards Clones over the Moy bridge. The IRA planted a huge van bomb on the bridge. He asked, "Was that for social or cultural reasons? What about the bomb that was driven into the village of Clogher? A Roman Catholic father of several children was forced to drive a bomb along a twisty, bumpy road while his wife and children were being held at gunpoint. The vehicle was parked outside a draper's shop in the village

and the Roman Catholic woman who owned the shop and had carried on the business for years was lying on her death bed on the floor above. She had to be brought out on a stretcher. What was that? Was that for social, cultural or economic reasons?" Those are the questions that we must put to the IRA.

I could talk until midnight and beyond on this issue. Many stories must be told in this House so that people begin to face the practical reality of, and not just the philosophical arguments about, terrorism.

I advise the Minister who will reply that what we need is education, not equivocation. For 20 years the IRA and others, wittingly or unwittingly, have been conditioning the community in Northern Ireland to believe certain things that are fundamentally untrue and harmful to that community, not least that if we introduce internment everybody, not would, but should be alienated. I cannot believe that the decent members of the Roman Catholic community whom I know or the decent members of the Protestant community whom I know and who are the vast majority would go to the wire for the sake of one or two people within their immediate community who are holding them to ransom and making them hostages every bit as much as Saddam Hussein is making hostages of the people of Kuwait.

It is time that the Government faced up to their responsibility to condition not only the people of Northern Ireland, but those throughout the United Kingdom and further afield to the reality of the situation. They should not make believe that we are treating everybody with kid gloves. There are people whom we cannot treat with kid gloves. We cannot go on for ever saying, "We shall not do this because we know that you will all come out on to the street", or "Things would get worse if we did this or that." We must think of the 98 per cent. and more of the community who are law-abiding citizens and say to them soon, "We are doing this for your benefit. Understand our reasoning. There will be safeguards. The House of Commons and the courts will safeguard your rights, but you will have to endure some inconvenience for your own benefit and that of your neighbours, Protestant and Roman Catholic, who are being held to ransom."

If we can implement this legislation in that spirit, beginning to condition the community now to the inconvenience that it must endure, we shall go a long way towards ending the nightmare to which the hon. Member for Mid-Ulster alluded and which he predicted would not leave us for the next 20 years. Many of us do not have 20 years. Many of us will have less likelihood of seeing 20 years if action is not taken to implement the full rigours of the law and to explain to the community why that must happen.

8.48 pm

Mr. Terry Dicks (Hayes and Harlington): As my hon. Friend the Member for Boothferry (Mr. Davis) has already said, it is a delicate matter for an English Member to speak on matters concerning Northern Ireland, even though it is part of this country. It is especially difficult after the wonderful and moving speech given by my colleague and friend the hon. Member for Mid-Ulster (Rev. William McCrea). How can one follow the drama of that speech and the heartfelt feelings he expressed?

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State should be aware that the regulations are not tough enough. I am sure that previous Secretaries of State made exactly the same speech, which contained the same good wishes and promises, but we are as badly off now as we ever were. We are not winning the battle against terrorism and to pretend that we are is misleading and a delusion. The people of Britain, especially of Northern Ireland, know that the battle has not been won and that it is getting worse. The hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis) cited figures to prove that.

The security forces are not given sufficient freedom to do what is necessary. They know the identity of some of the villians, the terrorists and their leaders, but they must fight their battle against terrorism with one hand—no, perhaps two—tied behind their backs. Tonight concern has been expressed about a shoot-to-kill policy conducted by the security forces. I hope to God they never have a shoot-to-miss policy. If a shoot-to-kill policy means that IRA terrorists are put away, I have no compunction about lending my support to it.

Clause 32 of the Bill refers to

"any hood, mask or other article . . . used for concealing the identity of features".

No mention is made of the wearing of military uniforms. People cannot understand why we allow the funeral of a murdered IRA terrorist to take place on the streets of Northern Ireland at which other terrorists wear uniform and fire a salute. As we watch that on English television we ask ourselves what the hell is going on. Those people are terrorists and murderers, but my Government sit back and allow them to have their funerals.

Why are the Government so proud of a policy that allows long-serving IRA terrorists to have Christmas at home with their families? The Minister will have heard from my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Ulster about the suffering of widows and children and those maimed by that dirty, filthy war. However, Ministers proudly sit on the Front Bench and boast about how they allow such terrorists to go home to spend Christmas with their families. What a disgusting and disgraceful situation.

I was appalled that, when a terrorist recently died, his brother was allowed compassionate leave to attend his funeral. What sort of compassion is it when my Government allow a convicted terrorist to weep for his brother who was killed by the security forces for being a terrorist? What sort of society do we have that allows that?

We must have emergency regulations, but the ones before us are not strong enough. But consider the policies of the Labour party. I cannot believe what it says. All it is concerned about is the rights of people. Let us consider the Labour party amendment. It condemns the Bill for

"refusing to remove internment without trial from the Statute Book and failing to introduce the video-taping of interviews with terrorist suspects".

It also calls for

"the 'certifying in' of scheduled offences . . . an ombudsman to consider the operation of complaints . . . and a statutory duty for the Commission of Human Rights to supervise the operation of the statute".

What does the Labour party think is going on in Northern Ireland—Butlin's holiday camp, a tea party or a dance at the Ritz on a Saturday afternoon? I did not hear the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) mention responsibilities once; he just spoke about the rights of this, that and the other. Does he not realise that rights and responsibilities represent two sides of one coin? One cannot talk about the rights of a terrorist or a potential terrorist without that terrorist accepting

[Mr. Terry Dicks]

responsibility for the society in which he lives. Opposition Members have expressed their concern about those in prison, but those prisoners gave up the right for any consideration the minute they refused to accept their responsibility to act in a decent and humane fashion on the streets of Northern Ireland.

The Labour party has also called for an inquiry into the wonderful job the SAS did in Gibraltar and for an inquiry about the young lads who pinched a car and tried to get through a police road block. If someone gets into a car for a joyride in Northern Ireland and does not stop at a police block, he should expect, and should get, exactly what is coming to him.

Mr. Harry Barnes *rose*——

Mr. Dicks: I am sorry, but time is short and I will not give way.

Other Labour Members have written a letter to *The Cork Examiner*. Their message to the southern Irish Government was clear—do not send anybody back here because they will not get a fair trial. That is the policy followed by the real Labour party.

In the past four years the Labour party has stood on its head about virtually every policy, but it has remained consistent in voting against the regulations. If I have not said enough about the present Labour party, let me tell the House about the type of person it has selected to fight me for Hayes and Harlington at the next election. That man, when he had a seat of power at the Greater London council, invited Sinn Fein and IRA members to visit at ratepayers' expense. He invited them over to talk about their problems—no doubt it had something to do with the troops out movement and all the rest of it. The Labour party has allowed its local constituency party to select such a person to fight the next election, but the Opposition spokesmen claim that they abhor terrorism and are opposed to it. I wish that their mealy-mouthed words could be heard by more people, as they represent their two-faced hypocrisy.

What action should be taken to get things right? We must consider the regulations in their proper context. My Government should tell the southern Irish Government to remove from their constitution articles 2 and 3, which threaten to take over the six counties in due course. If the Government believe that we should take tough action, they should tell those terrorist lovers in the south to get rid of those articles from the constitution to show that they mean business.

What about the wonderful Anglo-Irish Agreement which I voted against five years ago? We were told that that would provide all the answers to the problems of Northern Ireland, but, as the hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone has already said, acts of terrorism have increased since its introduction. It is a disgusting agreement and a sop to southern Ireland. It has not improved the situation in Northern Ireland and it is a disgrace to this country and my Government. Before we talk about further regulations we should take real action by getting rid of articles 2 and 3 in the Irish constitution as well as the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

The situation in Northern Ireland is one of war. It is not an issue about rights and wrongs or playing fair. The terrorists' basic rule is that we should play ball with them, but they will stick the bat up our rear end. It is about time we told the IRA that this is a battle. The IRA calls itself an army. We need not recognise that, but we should say that we will take it on wherever we must. If that means that we and our security forces must get down in the gutter with them to win, so help us, we will. To sit here and say that we are doing our best when, in a few days, we shall hear about more innocent people being killed and more terrorists getting away with it is unbelievable. What with that and people being put up overnight at a cost of £3,000 and terrorist prisoners going home for Christmas, the British people cannot believe it.

The sorrowful thing for me is that I had to sit here to listen to such a moving speech from my friend the hon. Member for Mid-Ulster. If nothing else happens, I hope that hon. Members were moved by that speech and that the Secretary of State will have second thoughts about what needs to be done about Northern Ireland. We must take tough measures and we must beat terrorism; lovely platitudes expressed in the Chamber will be no help at all.

8.57 pm

Mr. Eddie McGrady (South Down): I am surprised that hon. Members think that we are legislating for terrorists. We are not. We are legislating for the entire people of Northern Ireland, which is an important difference. The Bill will apply not only to the terrorists of Northern Ireland, but to every citizen, good bad or indifferent. For that reason, we must be careful, when withdrawing a right or imposing a burden or liability on a person, to ensure that that person has the full protection of the law.

I wish to address the Bill in its broadest sense. Each year we have a debate similar to this, whether it concerns the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 or the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act. Each time, another chunk is bitten out of the normal rule of law. Let us be clear: we are referring not to the normal rule of law, but to its withdrawal. As was pointed out earlier, it is important that when that happens there is full justification for every item that withdraws that rule of law.

For instance, earlier it was said that capital punishment would be a deterrent. The hon. Member for Mid-Ulster (Rev. William McCrea) referred to the Ellis case and the ending of a hunger strike. However, he seems to have quickly forgotten a lesson. The Provisional IRA encouraged and deliberately let die eight of its own members, one after another, in a protracted public-relations exercise of the most horrible kind. That is not fear of the final punishment, but a use, or abuse, of it. That is why I do not think that capital punishment should be a consideration; but, although it is not included in the debate tonight, it leads me to my next point.

We reach a stage at which the withdrawal of the normal rights of the rule of law becomes an oppression in itself. I do not know where the dividing line is; I am not a lawyer, only an observer. In support of my case, I do not propose to draw on the deaths of members of the police, members of the UDR and innocent people from both sides of the community in my constituency. I do not wish to base my arguments on them, but propose to state my view on the basis of my own experiences and observations.

I was challenged fairly directly by the hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis), who said that he could not understand my misgivings about, for instance, the UDR. He himself said that, if the UDR did

not exist, he and his fellows would have to create such a force for the Protestant people. I could refer to an example from my constituency, where a person was murdered by two serving members of the UDR and somone who had just ceased to be a member. But that is not the point: the point is that there is an element of distrust, which is endemic and must be addressed. We cannot wish it away. That instance—along with several others—is an indication of the problem.

Mr. Maginnis: I know that I spoke for a long time, and I do not want to take up the hon. Gentleman's time, but I must correct him. I never suggested that, if we did not have an Ulster Defence Regiment, we would need a Protestant force to protect us. I said that, if we did not have properly constituted forces of law and order to stand between us and the terrorist, the community would have a responsibility to protect itself. I stand by that.

Mr. McGrady: I stand by what I originally said, as it is on the public record.

The more that rights are withdrawn, the more it is seen as oppression, and the more credibility is given to the terrorists' arguments and to those whom we are all trying to defeat. In his introductory remarks, the Secretary of State said that there was nothing startlingly new in the Bill. If I may use my own words, it is more or less a regurgitation of what has gone before. That is not true. There are new and troubling restrictions of individual rights, and also some important omissions that could be corrected to make the package more viable and cohesive.

The proposal that will probably give the most trouble is the possibility that otherwise innocent articles in a person's possession may, merely on the suspicion of an investigative officer or Army personnel, be deemed to be a contribution to an intended act of terrorism. That, without any collaborating evidence, would constitute a grave abuse or crime warranting a severe sentence. That is one of the most alarming parts of the Bill, and the Government must take a close look at its practical implications.

I shall draw attention to only one or two of the missed opportunities, but certainly not to the suggestion that we should introduce phone tapping because there is quite a bit of that in Northern Ireland at present. A matter of grave concern to most people is the absence of the right to silence. The Secretary of State's arguments about non-intention were weak and apologetic when he said that taped video recordings of interviews and interrogations could not and would not be made available.

It is evident that in many disputed sectors of the application of law, based as they often are on confession and statements made without a great deal of, and sometimes no, collaborating evidence, it would be absolutely invaluable in upholding the law and ensuring that it was just that video tape recordings should be made available. It is no argument to say that such recordings would expose the interrogating officers or personnel to threats to their lives or intimidation. As has been said, modern technology allows the appearances of such people on television to be blurred.

The Bill includes a section on searching and finding written matter that may be deemed to be of some use to terrorists. The subject is far reaching and I ask the Minister of State and the Government to take a close look at it. It reminds me of the broadcasting ban in a different guise. I argued against that strongly at the time and it has since become the total nonsense it was predicted to be. All of us have watched television and heard interviews where a dubbed voice is heard over a photograph of the subject matter or the person speaking. One of the ironies of that is that it prevents political debate with people making propaganda on behalf of terrorism. It prevents us challenging face to face the so-called arguments put forward to justify terrorism.

Mr. Maginnis: The hon. Gentleman failed to do that for 18 years before the ban.

Mr. McGrady: If the hon. Gentleman wants to intervene, he should ask me and I shall let him. I am constantly picking up his voice, much to my distraction.

Were it not for the broadcasting ban, we could have a political onslaught of verbal dialogue that could not be won by the terrorist propaganda of today.

We are dealing with a broad spectrum of people in Northern Ireland. Many of the Bill's powers apply to ordinary people, not terrorists. I know that the Minister will be aware that whole communities can be held to ransom by the application of a security measure. Livelihoods can be lost overnight and homes and businesses made non-viable simply because physical structures are erected as security measures. Many of the operations are ill-conceived and the case for them is badly argued. The Bill will make such action easier and will be less effective than it should in combating terrorism and discouraging sympathy for it.

Let me refer to propaganda. Every time the Government introduce a Bill such as this and include new provisions, they create an image of repression and suppression, and good use is made of that for propaganda purposes. That beguiles those who do not support terrorism and deludes them into thinking that there is justification for some of the horrific deeds that are done. As many hon. Members have said, the vast majority of people in Northern Ireland support law and order. They do not support terrorism. They want to live normal lives, just like everybody else. By introducing more and more repressive legislation—withdrawing people's rights under the normal rule of law—we are playing into the hands of the terrorists.

I hope that the Secretary of State will take on board the concerns that I have expressed, not because I have any sympathy at all for terrorism—as the right hon. Gentleman knows, I have stood up against all forms of terrorism in my constituency—but because the protection of people is just as important as the suppression of terrorism.

9.11 pm

Mr. Rupert Allason (Torbay): One of the objectives of the terrorist is to provoke overreaction, and one of our concerns this evening must be that even the title of the Bill plays, to some extent, into the extremists' hands. We must all be concerned about introducing legislation specifically for the Province of Northern Ireland. Anybody who has any experience of Northern Ireland—and a large part of my family lives there—knows that one must try to strike the right balance between the rights of the vast majority of the community and the desire to combat terrorism.

The measures in the Bill would be greeted with widespread dismay if anyone even tried to suggest that they should be applied to the mainland. We are talking

[Mr. Rupert Allason]

about the principle of dealing with Northern Ireland quite separately from the rest of the United Kingdom. Yet, strangely, I think that some of the measures in the Bill could usefully be applied to the whole of the United Kingdom. Pressure has been brought to bear, for example, for the registration of private security firms—a subject on which I have been in touch with the Home Secretary. It has always been a mystery to me that the Government should consistently say that they are not prepared to legislate for that on the mainland but are perpetuating the existing orders relating to almost exactly the same set of circumstances in Northern Ireland. I find that truly astonishing.

I should like to explore some of the matters dealt with in Lord Colville's report. Two of them in particular concern me. The first relates to the video-taping of interviews. Some years ago when I was serving in the Metropolitan police the prospect of an audio tape trial was greeted with some alarm by my colleagues. It has now been proved to be a great asset to the police and the police are pleased with many aspects of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 relating to that trial and its perpetuation.

I urge the Government seriously to consider the introduction of video-taping for trials in Northern Ireland. We know from the noble Lord's report that that is perfectly practicable. We also know that a certain amount of video-taping is already taking place in the holding centres. However, like everything else in Northern Ireland, that is no black-and-white issue because there is then the problem of access to those tapes.

I do not want to reopen the Stalker affair, but we must all be perfectly familiar with its circumstances. At the final hurdle it boiled down to who should, or should not, have access to an audio tape that was alleged to contain the recording of what had taken place immediately prior to an incident in Northern Ireland. The tape had been collected clandestinely by the Security Service and at one stage the police wanted access to it. However, it was never made available, and that became the brick wall that John Stalker came up against.

Although video-taping is easy and I advocate its introduction, one must be concerned about access to the finished tape. If somebody in a holding centre decided to volunteer information, perhaps to become a supergrass or to undertake a role as an undercover informant, his longevity could be severely threatened if the video-tape were subsequently seen by certain people.

Unquestionably, many parts of the Bill are repressive. As I said, if it were presented to the House as a measure for the rest of the United Kingdom, it would be greeted with widespread dismay. But, of course, the circumstances in Northern Ireland are quite different. In one respect, the Secretary of State is quite correct. There is a sign that at long last we are getting the upper hand in the intelligence war in Northern Ireland. There has recently been considerable success against INLA, the Irish National Liberation Army, and that is welcome. There has also been a series of successes against the Provisional IRA.

In most walks of life failure is an orphan and success has many fathers. Intelligence is no different. The paradox in the intelligence world is that success cannot be proclaimed from the roof-tops. We do not know the circumstances or the background that led to the successful interception of the INLA attack. We shall probably never know, and that is as it should be. The key to counter-terrorist operations in Northern Ireland and everywhere else must be good intelligence. Part of good intelligence is the confidence of the community about being able to volunteer information to the authorities.

The noble Lord Colville said in his report that the Army and police respond quickly and well to complaints. Last year an Act was passed to allow ordinary citizens some indirect access to Security Service files. A tribunal was established and a commissioner appointed to deal with complaints. However, we are debating a Bill that specifically declines to go down that avenue in the face of a proposal from the noble Lord Colville. That seems strange. Several of those issues are mentioned in the Opposition amendment, but that amendment goes far too far.

The Security Service tribunal and its function in this country is a model that could be applied on a broader scale in Northern Ireland. One would have simply to substitute for the title, "Security Service commissioner", "Security Service ombudsman". That would command great respect in Northern Ireland and might improve the level of information being volunteered by the community. There are two problems with the way in which the system works in England. First, there is undue secrecy surrounding the entire system. When we debated the Security Service Act 1989 in the House last year, it was my belief that ordinary citizens would have an opportunity to make a complaint, the complaint would be pursued by the commisioner and there would be an element of redress for the complainant. Unfortunately, it turns out that the tribunal has declined to pursue any complaints relating to matters that occurred before 18 December 1989. That is against the spirit expressed in the House when we debated the Act.

The second problem is that, when I asked my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary how many complaints had been received by the Security Services tribunal and how many of those complaints had been investigated by the tribunal, I was told that both answers are secret. It seems crazy, when we are trying to restore public confidence in the security authorities by creating such a mechanism, not to allow an opportunity for the public to judge the effectiveness of that measure. I am disappointed that the issues are still secret, because that runs contrary to what I believe that the House intended last year. In Canada, those affairs are dealt with differently, and if an annual report were published here, that would be helpful for the public.

Such a report would also be of great benefit to hon. Members. Unfortunately, although there is an opportunity for the Security Service commissioner to write such a report, we do not know whether it would ever be published. In Canada, when the report is published, it includes case histories, and that is a marvellous example of how security authorities can explain to the public and to the taxpayer how the system works, and what the challenges are to the authorities, and give a few graphic examples of the terrorism and subversion, and in this case espionage, which have to be dealt with every year. We already have a precedent for such an ombudsman and to introduce such a system would be of benefit to the people of Northern Ireland.

Two of the Bill's provisions will be widely welcomed in Northern Ireland by anybody who knows anything about

the border country. The new offence of going equipped for terrorism will be of great benefit to the authorities in Northern Ireland. I commend the Bill to the House.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Mr. Jim Marshall.

Mr. Harry Barnes: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I cannot claim that I am aggrieved at not having been called to speak in the debate, because I understand the circumstances, but hon. Members representing Northern Ireland constituencies often complain—I complain with them—about the lack of interest shown in their affairs by hon. Members representing constituencies in Great Britain. However, if they talk at great length in debates, that means that the rest of us do not then have the opportunity to be involved in Northern Ireland debates. Six Members representing Northern Ireland constituencies have spoken and the average length of their speeches has been 35 minutes.

Madam Deputy Speaker: That is an interesting point of order, but it is not within the authority of the Chair to control the length of speeches.

9.24 pm

Mr. Jim Marshall (Leicester, South): We have had a long debate this evening, and at times it has seemed longer than the normal span for such a debate. It is of regret to me—I am sure that it must be also to other hon. Members who attend these debates regularly—that no new argument has been advanced this evening.

With one exception, the debate has been a rehearsal of all the old arguments that we have heard on so many previous occasions. The exception was the contribution of the hon. Member for Torbay (Mr. Allason), who, perhaps alone among Conservative Members, sees some credit in the Opposition's amendment. He thinks that the amendment goes too far, but at least he is open minded enough to accept that there are faults in the proposed legislation and that where faults arise they should be corrected.

I thank the hon. Member for Torbay for adding further credibility to the Opposition's argument that the proposed legislation is repressive and that if such legislation were introduced into the remainder of the United Kingdom it would be met with dismay and widespread outrage. It is for that reason that we continually say, as my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) said at the beginning of his speech, that any deviations from the normal rule of law must be justified when they are introduced and on every other occasion when Parliament discusses them. If we are not faced with the norm, we must justify deviations on every possible occasion.

It is no criticism of the Chair, Madam Deputy Speaker, when I say that I regret that no other Labour Member apart from my hon. Friend the Member for Kinston upon Hull, North and myself has been called to speak in this debate. The Chair will have heard repeated attacks on Labour party policy from 3.30 pm and it is a source of regret to me—I think that it will be to my party as a whole —that no Labour Members, with the exception of the Opposition Front-Bench speakers, have had an opportunity to refute the malicious slurs and allegations that have been made against the Labour party.

I thank the Secretary of State for taking us so clearly and concisely through the contents of the Bill. I agree with his objective that the Province of Northern Ireland must be cleansed of the abomination of violence. I do not think that anyone in the House would disagree with that primary objective. I agreed when he said—I think that he reinforced the Labour party's policy on this issue—that modifications to our ordinary law must be justified whenever they are made. Having congratulated the right hon. Gentleman, it is a matter of great regret to me and my party that, in introducing once again the proposed emergency legislation and making great play of the report and recommendations of Viscount Colville of Culross, he has found it unnecessary to introduce the viscount's recommendations in the Bill.

The Secretary of State said that the Government are still thinking about a possible complaints procedure against the security forces. The right hon. Gentleman expressed the hope that he or the Government would be able to return to the procedure during the progress of legislation. I ask a question to which I hope the Minister of State will be able to respond: do the Government intend to introduce clauses setting out a complaints procedure while the Bill progresses through this place or another place? I should be glad if the Secretary of State could give some sign of the time scale that the Government have in mind.

The hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) made an interesting speech. It came as no surprise that, once again, he used this occasion to go through his ritualistic condemnation of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. He then rhetorically asked whether there was any hope for Northern Ireland. He said that there was, but that that would require further steps, and claimed that he had already outlined those steps.

I listened closely and carefully to the hon. Gentleman, but I did not hear one positive statement about how the progress towards normalisation in the Province could be attained. I merely hope that, on just one occasion, the hon. Gentleman will be a little more positive and outline the steps that he believes should be taken to counteract and diminish the impact of terrorism in the Province.

I carefully followed the long speech of the hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble). He made great play of there being no possibility of any change in the structure of the political system in Northern Ireland. It is incredible that he should think that any discussions about political changes are wrong and, perhaps, immoral. I fail to understand the basis of his proposition. No political structures are immutable and only a fool would suggest otherwise.

The shortest speech in the debate—and perhaps it is a model that we should have followed—came from the hon. Member for Hampshire, North-West (Sir D. Mitchell). His substantive point was that the British people and their representatives will never give in to terrorism. I think that the hon. Gentleman spoke for every hon. Member.

I accept without reservation the propostion of the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) that what terrorists fear most is normality, and that they thrive on abnormality. Whether Government or Opposition Members, we must ensure that a semblance of normality returns to the Province as quickly as possible.

[Mr. Jim Marshall]

The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile), who spoke on behalf of the Liberal Democrats, said that the Secretary of State's refusal to remove internment from the statute book was a political decision. I agree with that conclusion. The Secretary of State is afraid to remove internment from the statute book because, despite all the evidence, he thinks that he might be accused of being soft on terrorism. He does not need to prove that he is tough on terrorism; everybody knows that he is. He should have had the courage to accept Lord Colville's recommendation, and that of all reasonable people, that internment should be removed from the statute book.

The hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks)—I wish that he was in the Chamber—said that he wanted the security forces to take stronger and further action. I am never quite sure what hon. Members mean by that. Do they want British soldiers and members of the RUC to go out on covert operations and kill people, whether or not they are in possession of weapons? If that is what Conservative Members want, they should come clean and tell the House and the British people that that is so. On not one occasion have they enunciated the policies and strategies that they want the RUC and the British Army to follow in Northern Ireland on our behalf. Until they do, they should be quiet and support the present activities and policies of the RUC and the British Army in the Province.

The House is united in its determination not to allow violence to succeed, and to ensure that the security forces should have the resources necessary to both combat and suppress terrorism. However, we must not lose sight of the fact that force alone will not defeat the terrorists and that political progress is also required. Most of us acknowledge that the seeds of violence will not be removed until all members of the Northern Ireland community, irrespective of their traditions, feel that they have an equal part to play, not only in the economic and social life of the Province but its political life.

I am sure that it has occurred to the Government, as it has to me, that it is no mere coincidence that there has been an upsurge in the IRA's activities recently, just at the time that the Secretary of State is seeking to start talks between all the constitutional parties on a consensual political settlement. That is the last thing that the terrorists want, because once a consensual political settlement is achieved it will remove at a stroke the IRA's whole raison d'etre and exclude it—for ever, one hopes—from the political process. I hope also—but perhaps it is a forlorn hope—that that realisation will provide a further incentive for the Province's constitutional parties and the British and Irish Governments to discuss again the possibility of talks aimed at reaching a political settlement.

All reasonable people who have witnessed the anguish and suffering of the Northern Ireland community accept, however reluctantly, that in the Province there must be deviations from normal police powers and accepted judicial processes as they apply in other parts of the United Kingdom. Nevertheless, we must not shrink from enacting legislation that seeks to protect the interests of suspects in custody, however much we may dislike doing so and however distasteful that may be. No matter how heinous may be the crimes of which suspects may be thought to be guilty, we have a duty and responsibility to introduce legislation of that kind also.

To distinguish ourselves from the terrorists, we must never forget that our methods are not those that they use. Not for us the false confession; not for us summary justice. The security forces are there to protect human rights, not undermine them. The security forces are there to enforce the rule of law, not abuse it.

All this may seem a cold political exercise to those suffering at the hands of terrorists and it may not offer the immediate comfort of calls for internment, more draconian security tactics or the death penalty. But to do otherwise would not only hand a propaganda victory to the terrorists but expose as a sham our claim to be defending a better and more desirable set of values.

The Government can take credit for removing many of the social and economic grievances on which terrorists thrive, but it is to their discredit that they have not shown the same courage and conviction by accepting Lord Colville's suggestions for change in the legislation before us.

Lord Colville is no starry-eyed radical. Anyone who has read his report must be struck by its deeply conservative view. He is in no doubt that the emergency legislation must continue. It is against that background of certainty about the legislation and its continuity that he makes recommendations for change which are neither radical nor revolutionary. Whether by accident or by design, they would make a package of legislation more acceptable to the community and protect the security forces' reputation against malicious allegations.

The Government have lost an opportunity to show that they are prepared to listen to reasoned argument. Unfortunately, they have succumbed to the argument produced from various quarters this evening that any change might be misinterpreted as being soft on terrorism. It is a missed opportunity, and I think that the Government will come to regret it sooner rather than later.

The refusal to repeal the legal basis for internment is unbelievable. The provisions have not been used since 1975 and no one can foresee any circumstances in which they would be reactivated. I do not need to call in aid the Labour party—all the Tory Members who have been reading out the brief from Conservative party central office this evening will recognise that as an argument which is put forward by their own research department at Transport house. It is unbelievable.

Mr. McNamara: Smith square.

Mr. Marshall: Yes, at Smith square—perhaps that was some sort of Freudian slip about our policy review.

The Labour party's position is quite clear. We believe that, as a practical solution to the conflict in Northern Ireland, internment is of no value. Even if the Government cannot accept the Labour party view or that of Tory party cental office in Smith square, they should at least accept Lord Colville's point of view. His conclusion is that internment is widely condemned in other countries and that the provisions should not be re-enacted. To seek to justify the retention of such provisions, on the basis of some unforeseen circumstances in the future, when Parliament might be in recess, stretches the bound of credibility too far.

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Mr. John Cope) *rose*——

Mr. Marshall: If the Minister will allow me, I shall take two more minutes. I am sure that he will recognise that a Conservative Back Bencher exceeded the recognised time by two or three minutes.

Lord Colville accepted that there could be problems with video recordings, but that they could be resolved. He suggested some practical ways in which they could be resolved. I hope, even at this late stage, that the Government will accept that suggestion and introduce videos in holding centres.

Finally, for these reasons, and for those that my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, North advanced at the beginning of the debate on behalf of the Opposition, I hope that the House will support our amendment. If it fails, I hope that hon. Members will join us in the Lobby to vote against the Second Reading.

9.43 pm

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Mr. John Cope): We have had an interesting and wide-ranging debate about politics and about theology. In response to several hon. Members, I must say that the Bill needs to be seen in its context. Defeating terrorism is not only a matter of security policy but involves political, economic and social policies.

A considerable amount has been said in the debate about victims. The whole of Northern Ireland falls victim to the terrorist threat. The hon. Member for Mid-Ulster (Rev. William McCrea) and others reminded us of a few of the victims who are the background to our discussion today. The hon. Gentleman referred movingly to the death of Mr. Albert Cooper—just one of the many victims to whom he referred. I met one of Mr. Cooper's close relatives a few days ago, along with some prison service widows and their families, and I know exactly what the hon. Gentleman means. I know the story well.

I wish that I could promise the hon. Gentleman and, indeed, the whole House that this or any other piece of legislation would wipe terrorism and terrorists off the face of the earth. Of course, the Bill will not do so by itself —that is a much bigger job—but I believe that it will make a contribution. However, it will take much more—a combined legal, security, economic, social and political effort—to eradicate terrorism. Above all, we must get through to the terrorists the realisation that what they are about is futile and that democracy will win.

Tonight we are looking solely at the law within which the security forces make their vital contribution to the defeat of terrorism. The Bill is partly renewal, partly consolidation—perhaps not in the technical sense in which the House uses that word, but in the general sense—and partly novel. The novel parts are, in fact, much the smallest aspect of the Bill.

Our first job is to justify the necessity for the renewal of powers such as are in the Bill. In general terms, that is, sadly, an easy job. Terrorists from both groups—republican and so-called loyalist—continue to kill and maim, to shoot and bomb. These last few murderous weeks have emphasised again the necessity for powers such as these.

We shall review all the detail in Committee, although I shall cover as much as possible in a moment. If the security forces are to have the chance of catching the men of terror, and if the law is to have a proper and fair opportunity to judge, convict and sentence those criminals, extra powers within the law are essential because the paramilitaries use the extra power of ruthless terror to silence witnesses, to negate juries and to threaten the life and work of everyone engaged in maintaining the rule of law—policemen, judges and the rest.

However, the powers are exceptional emergency powers, which none of us likes to see. That is why the House gives them only a limited life and that is why we are renewing both the powers and the safeguards. I wish—I am sure that all other hon. Members wish—that we could relax the emergency provisions and begin the process of bringing the law back to normal, but given the problems of catching and convicting these criminals, we cannot reduce the power of the police and the law to achieve prosecutions in the appallingly difficult circumstances in which they have to operate. We face a highly organised criminal conspiracy and society must protect itself against that.

Lord Colville's principal recommendation in his review of the Acts was that the main emergency provisions remain necessary and, obviously, we agree. The consolidation aspects of the Bill flow from recommendations also made by Lord Colville and others. They do not go quite as far as the hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble) wanted, but they go in the direction that he wanted. The Government recognise the widespread desire that the legislation to deal with terrorism, both in Northern Ireland and in the United Kingdom as a whole, should be as simple and as coherent as possible.

When the Bill is enacted, there will still be some overlap between the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 and the emergency provisions legislation, but, as Lord Colville recommended, the Bill brings together the two emergency provisions Acts and part VI of the prevention of terrorism Act, which applies exclusively to Northern Ireland. That makes for rather a long Bill, but it is the right thing to do and will make life easier for all those who have to deal with the legislation and put it into practice.

As I said, the novel aspects of the Bill will be discussed in detail in Committee, but I shall mention some now. The Government believe that, taken as a whole, the Bill represents a proportionate response to the current terrorist threat in Northern Ireland. It contains the measures that we consider necessary to combat terrorism. It continues to strike the careful balance that was called for in the debate by my hon. Friend the Member for Torbay (Mr. Allason) and others, between providing additional powers for the police and the armed forces to tackle terrorism and safeguards for those accused or suspected of terrorist crimes. I do not apologise to my hon. Friend the Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks) or to anyone else for the safeguards. We must avoid the alienation of the innocent.

The Bill's provisions will be subject, in the normal way, to annual renewal by both Houses of Parliament. The Bill will have a fixed five-year life. There will, therefore, be further opportunities for Parliament to consider the legislation.

Many hon. Members have referred to executive detention or internment. Having considered Lord Colville's report and the wide range of other opinions expressed on the issue, we came to the view, contained in the Bill, that we must retain that option while the terrorist

[Mr. John Cope]

threat remains so acute. We, like the Republic of Ireland, regard it as a weapon that we must keep in our armoury. The possibility of reintroducing it will be kept carefully under review. To do away with the power would be to rule it out for all time. One cannot use the power if one gives notice of it. To give notice of the intention to introduce a Bill to bring it in at some time, when one wants to use it, is to warn everyone concerned and to give them the opportunity to disappear. That is why we believe that surprise will be an important element in its initial effectiveness. That would be lost if new legislation were required to bring it in at the time.

The position at the moment is that an order to introduce detention would require affirmation by both Houses of Parliament within 40 sitting days. Our intention is to keep it that way. If the power were used, Parliament would wish and would have the opportunity to discuss it urgently at that time. We are not cutting out parliamentary discussion, but we are saying that we need to introduce the power first and then to confirm it in Parliament within 40 sitting days, because the element of surprise is essential.

Another aspect to which much attention has been drawn during the debate is the video-recording of interviews with terrorist suspects. After long and careful consideration, our conclusion is the same as that of the Bennett commission, which comprehensively reviewed the safeguards for terrorist suspects during interrogation in its report that it published in 1978. These are not ordinary criminals or suspects with whom we are concerned; they are men and women caught up in terrorist organisations. Among other things, the Bennett report said:

"the evidence of our police witnesses, and our own impression, is that some suspects need to be allowed certain room for manoeuvre in what story they tell afterwards if they are to be frank with the police at the time when they are interviewed".

We have taken the view that the knowledge that an interview was to be recorded would in many cases seriously inhibit the willingness of suspects to co-operate with the RUC in the interview. It would thus seriously jeopardise the usefulness of the interview process. That process itself remains crucial to the RUC in its efforts to deal effectively with terrorism.

The reality is that the members of the paramilitary organisations, both so-called loyalist and republican, are not free agents, by the nature of the organisations to which they belong. Those organisations seek to maintain tight discipline over their members, to prevent the disclosure to the police of any information that might assist them to prevent terrorist attacks or to apprehend or convict offenders. Neither the police nor the terrorist suspect could be certain that in future there would be no circumstances in which a video-recording of an interview might get into the hands of a terrorist organisation. That uncertainty would be a powerful deterrent to terrorist suspects considering offering assistance to the police. Moreover, video-recording of the interview in the interview room would not by itself be sufficient to prevent complaints from those who are determined to discredit the investigation process. The focus of such allegations would simply shift to elsewhere in the process.

We have also heard a good deal about complaints against the security forces. I was asked about the matter specifically. Lord Colville describes the existing procedures comprehensively. It is clear from that that the Government and the security forces—both the police and the Army—attach serious importance to complaints procedures and their effectiveness.

The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) seemed to attack by implication the Independent Commission for Police Complaints for Northern Ireland. But I recommend that everyone with an interest in the subject should read the report of the commission. That should reassure them about the police side of the complaints procedure.

With regard to complaints about the actions of members of the armed forces, I say to the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon)—or I would if he were here—that harassment is wrong in principle and dangerous in effect. We all accept that. We also recognise that there is a feeling that the system for dealing with complaints against the Army is not wholly satisfactory. I shall not go into it in detail now, but it is set out at length in the report. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said, we shall return to discussion of the system at some point during the passage of the Bill. The hon. Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Marshall) also asked about it. It seems unlikely that improvements will necessarily require changes to the law, but we must find a way of introducing the discussion in Committee.

A related aspect is the question of lay visitors. The Police Authority for Northern Ireland is introducing lay visiting arrangements. They have been extended to take in all the 15 police stations designated under the Police and Criminal Evidence Order 1989 for the purpose of detaining arrested persons. To date, all the lay visiting has been done by members of the police authority itself, but it is intended to make the visiting groups more representative of the community.

At present, neither persons detained under the emergency legislation nor the three holding centres are included in the lay visiting scheme.

Mr. McGrady: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Cope: No. I am sorry, but I have insufficient time.

The hon. Member for Mid-Ulster raised the possibility that a suspected terrorist might receive £3,000 for spending one night in a cell on suspicion of involvement in terrorism. I did not catch the source of his information, but under section 14 of the prevention of terrorism Act "a constable may arrest . . . a person whom he has reasonable ground for suspecting to be a person who is or has been concerned in the commission, preparation or instigation of acts of terrorism".

In those circumstances, there would be no grounds for any form of compensation.

I was asked other specific questions, particularly by my hon. Friend the Member for Hampshire, North-West (Sir D. Mitchell). Research into the right of silence is being carried out, but it will necessarily take some time. Electronic developments are high in the priorities of the RUC and, indeed, the Army. They keep them under careful review and have our full backing in doing so.

We all hate the necessity for the Bill, for it flows from the murderous attempt to replace democracy by terror. In their amendment, the Opposition make no mention of the terrorist menace. They talk only of confidence. But I am sure that every Member of the House, which, after all, stands for democracy, wants to see terrorism beaten and the rule of law prevail. Without powers such as those

contained in the Bill, neither the courts, the police nor any aspect of law enforcement could work and the public could not be protected. All we democratic politicians should ensure as our first duty that the rule of law can prevail over the rule of terror. That is what the Bill is about and everyone should support it.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 118, Noes 240

Division No. 5] **[10 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Benton, Joseph
Bermingham, Gerald
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Duffy, A. E. P.
Eadie, Alexander
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
George, Bruce
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Lewis, Terry
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McAvoy, Thomas
McGrady, Eddie
McKelvey, William
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Mallon, Seamus
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Hara, Edward
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Sheerman, Barry
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Soley, Clive
Stott, Roger
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wareing, Robert N.
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Allen McKay.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas
Ashby, David
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Bellingham, Henry
Bellotti, David
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Cash, William
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cran, James
Davies, Q. *(Staml'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Durant, Tony
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Forth, Eric
Franks, Cecil
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Jessel, Toby
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
McCrea, Rev William
McCrindle, Sir Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
Maclennan, Robert
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maginnis, Ken
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip

Page, Richard
Paice, James
Paisley, Rev Ian
Patnick, Irvine
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Trimble, David
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Timothy Wood.

Question accordingly negatived.

Main Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 60 (Amendment on Second or Third Reading):—

The House divided: Ayes 234, Noes 113.

Division No. 6] **[10.14 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas
Ashby, David
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Bellingham, Henry
Bellotti, David
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cran, James
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Durant, Tony
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Forth, Eric
Franks, Cecil
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hind, Kenneth
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Jessel, Toby
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
McCrea, Rev William
McCrindle, Sir Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
Maclennan, Robert
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maginnis, Ken
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Paisley, Rev Ian
Patnick, Irvine
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Ryder, Richard
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Trimble, David
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry

Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Tom Sackville and
Mr. Neil Hamilton.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Benton, Joseph
Bermingham, Gerald
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Duffy, A. E. P.
Eadie, Alexander
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
George, Bruce
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Lewis, Terry
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McAvoy, Thomas
McGrady, Eddie
McKelvey, William
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Mallon, Seamus
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Morley, Elliot
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
O'Hara, Edward
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Rogers, Allan
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Sheerman, Barry
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Soley, Clive
Stott, Roger
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wareing, Robert N.
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Allen McKay.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill read a Second time, and committed to a Standing Committee, pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Bill [Money]

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Bill, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of any expenses of the Secretary of State under that Act.—*[Mr. Sackville.]*

10·25 pm

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): I shall not detain the House for long. I wish to speak against moneys being provided under this Act for the expenses of the Secretary of State. Paragraph 1·12, on page 4, of the Colville report says:

"There is universal agreement that the struggle to eradicate terrorism in Northern Ireland must be conducted with the widest possible support from the community if it is to be successful. That is said by those, like the Workers' Party, whose recipe would include abolition of the emergency powers Act."

I adhere to that position in opposing money being spent in connection with the Bill and therefore oppose the measure itself. In no sense am I opposed to the community taking action to eradicate terrorism from its midst.

In a sense, a democracy is obliged to fight terrorism with one hand tied behind its back in terms of its policing and Army activities. It is the extent to which those limitations should be imposed that concerns us. A democracy is fully compensated for its limitations by its ability to operate by compensating techniques and extra authority. Instead of spending money in these areas, we should spend money in Northern Ireland on such things as instigating devolved government for the Province so that many of the measures that come before us for inadequate discussion can be more fully discussed in Northern Ireland itself. Because of the problems that that is liable to create in terms of majority rule, which has often trampled on minority rights in Northern Ireland, a Bill of Rights to guarantee social and political rights for all citizens is essential. Democrats have always argued that education is an important element in developing—

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. I suspect that the hon. Gentleman knows that he is going very wide of the motion.

Mr. Barnes: I am suggesting that it is inappropriate for money to be spent in relation to the Bill and that it would be far more reasonable if money were spent in various alternative areas which I am trying briefly to identify.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman cannot debate those alternative areas. He may refer to them, but he cannot debate them.

Mr. Barnes: I was merely referring to them in passing. I suggest that one of those areas is integrated education involving the two communities. That could develop through the teachers' training colleges, which seem to be the first possibility of an area in which we should move. More important than the spending of money is the expression of attitudes that need to develop in society so that nowhere is there any ambivalence about the right to life of people in Northern Ireland. All those who are bravely willing to stand up in Northern Ireland and advocate that that is a basic provision that should operate

[Mr. Barnes]

in a democracy should have the support of politicians. Rather than being involved in measures such as this, and the spending of money involved in the resolution, politicians should be speaking out on behalf of such people.

These brave people include Nancy Gracey of Downpatrick, who has organised a group called Families Against Intimidation. The hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis) spoke of Catholics facing execution, kneecappings and other action by the IRA. Nancy Gracey's son was kneecapped by the Provisional IRA for joyriding. She has bravely been on television to express views that all hon. Members should wish to associate themselves with.

Recently there was another peace train initiative, with people travelling on trains between Belfast and Portadown that had been subject to disruption by paramilitary organisations from both sides of the sectarian divide. New Consensus, which operates throughout Northern Ireland, offers considerable hope for the future, and a body will be meeting in a Committee Room of the House on 27 November to try to extend its activities to Great Britain, so that there will be a support group standing for peace, democracy and progress throughout Ireland.

These groups require the oxygen of publicity. The Bill will deny the oxygen of publicity to Sinn Fein, but when Nancy Gracey appeared on a television programme to give her cause publicity, the Sinn Fein advocates used absolute nonsense to justify its activities. They have nothing proper to speak about, and their arguments can be countermanded by alternative arguments, and that should be part of the democratic process. Unfortunately, far too little attention is given to the people who stand out for peace, although they are arguing and advocating in their communities.

There are high hopes in the island of Ireland because of developments in the Republic of Ireland. The open hand of friendship has been offered by Mary Robinson, the new President, and has not yet been spurned by the different communities in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I remind the hon. Gentleman again that what he is saying, whatever its merits, has little to do with the motion.

Mr. Barnes: I am suggesting that these avenues for expenditure are rather more appropriate than those suggested in the money resolution.

The repeal of articles 2 and 3 of the Irish constitution, which would further some of these developments, has been suggested by several hon. Members, and strong forces in Ireland, including Mary Robinson and Proinsias de Rossa, the leader of the Workers' party, have advocated such a course.

10.33 pm

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Mr. John Cope): I am sorry that the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) thinks that the money spent under this resolution and the Bill would be better spent in the way that he suggests, not because I do not commend at least some of the organisations that he recommended spending it on but because the main expenditure made as a result of the resolution will continue to be for compensation—the biggest chunk of money—and payments for legal aid for bail applications. I do not think that the hon. Gentleman would want to take money from either of these sectors, even to spend it on the good causes that he mentioned.

We know about Nancy Gracey and the peace train, and I have noted what the hon. Gentleman said. I am sorry that he failed to speak in the earlier debate, but he has now made his points.

Question put and agreed to.

Private Rented Housing

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Nicholas Baker.]*

10.34 pm

Sir Ian Lloyd (Havant): From time to time most of us receive representations from constituents which, though they describe a grievous personal situation, raise matters of general principle and application which demand urgent attention from the legislature or the Government

Although the debate has been termed the "private rented sector", it should be described as the case of Miss Hayward and another. Miss Hayward, who is one of my constituents, has no objection to my disclosing all the details of this appalling case, all of which have been sent to my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment. That is because I hope that the Government will conclude, when they have considered the matter, as I have done at some length, that a society in which events such as these can occur is one which should set about redressing a general imbalance in the law, and not because I expect him to be able to do much for Miss Hayward. That redress is what my constituent sought when she came to see me. No personal redress was possible, and I believe that she was fully justified in seeking it.

I do not propose to name the other party. It is not necessary to do so, and I shall refer to her as Miss X. If the owner of an occupied dwelling is to be described by that medieval term "landlord", we must accept now that there are about 14 to 15 million landlords in the United Kingdom, the majority of whom own one house which from time to time they wish to let in whole or in part, entering into a freely negotiated contract with a tenant who finds it convenient to rent that accommodation, generally for a short period of a few years. I am advised that the majority of such tenants are under 24 years of age. In 1985, one in five households in that category was in rented furnished accommodation.

My constituent, Miss Hayward, purchased a small semi-detached house in 1988, and within months she and her fiancé were posted to Dubai in the Gulf. Meanwhile, she had arranged a mortgage, which cost her about £320 a month. It seemed sensible for her to rent the property for a fixed period to two nurses for £360 a month. It was essentially fully furnished.

Shortly after that arrangement had been made, one of the two tenants decided to leave. The other became pregnant, left her job and went on social security, leaving the rest of my constituents to pay her rent. On hearing this, Miss Hayward flew back from Dubai, took legal advice and negotiated a new contract with her tenant for six months. At the end of this period Miss X refused to leave, ceased to pay the agreed rent and put what is described as a fair rent assessment on the property. The effect of this was that my constituent was paying her tenant effectively £120 a month to live in her property. My constituent also had to find the arrears of her mortgage, which was a substantial sum, thus reducing her standard of living in Dubai. She had also to pay the rates and the insurance because no one else would pay them.

At this point my constituent took further and different legal advice. She negotiated a new six-months contract with her tenant, which included two-months' notice to quit as she was about to return from Dubai and naturally wished to reoccupy the house. But the tenant had no intention of moving. She, too, was taking legal advice, but at the taxpayer's expense. She was told to stay put. My constituent was advised that the second legal contract was worthless. She took yet further legal advice and started court proceedings. On 11 July of this year the court granted my constituent a possession order and costs. Neither Miss X nor her solicitor put in an appearance.

Worse was to follow. Miss X's solicitors had the effrontery to advise my constituent's solicitors that they were not aware of the court hearing and appealed to the court, which set another date for the tenant's case to be presented. When that date arrived, no case was presented and my constituent was informed that the tenant would voluntarily leave—voluntarily is the word that I emphasise—when a £500 deposit had been surrendered by my constituent.

After negotiations between the two firms of solicitors, that bribe—for that is the right term to describe it—was reduced to £120, and thus at that stage my constituent, to regain possession of her home, had paid out several thousand pounds in mortgage payments, rates, insurance and, of course, legal fees. So, too, had the rest of my constituents who were subsidising the other party through legal aid.

The payment to regain possession was conditional on the surrender of the keys of the property, but as the solicitor concerned handed over that sum to the tenant without obtaining the keys, the saga ended with my constituent and her fiancé having to break into their home to regain possession. I have since been shown photographs of the scene of utter devastation that awaited them. I would place an estimate of at least a couple of thousand pounds on the cost of restoring their property to some sense of normality.

Even then, the saga was not finished. Apparently the tenant had taken most of the furniture, most of the carpets and much personal property. She had left large, unpaid bills from the gas and electricity boards, British Telecom and others. When that was reported to the local police, I regret that they apparently did nothing, although the tenant's whereabouts must have been known. The whole house will have to be redecorated and refurnished.

This appalling saga raises a number of serious questions. First, is it in the least surprising that the private rented sector, which my hon. Friend the Minister recently said comprised some 600,000 empty properties, has declined, and is continuing to decline, when the law, despite all that my right hon. and hon. Friends have done, not merely permits but appears to subsidise such a state of affairs?

Secondly, I have ascertained from the latest Government statistics what the chances are of a private householder recovering his or her property from a tenant via the courts. In the year 1986-87, the most recent for which I have figures, resident private landlords took to court 7,986 cases for repossession. Their fate is both interesting and relevant. Some 2·2 per cent. were refused; 5·3 per cent. were told to wait two weeks; 66 per cent. were told to wait up to a month; 5 per cent. were told to wait up to eight weeks; and 8 per cent. were told to wait more than eight weeks. The statistics do not reveal how many were awarded costs, but I suspect that they could be numbered on the fingers of one hand. The figures for what are described as absentee landlords—my constituent was probably described as such, although I prefer the term absentee householder—are broadly the same. While that

[Sir Ian Lloyd]

position persists, defended by the current law, there is not a snowball's change in hell of the privated rented sector recovering as the Government would wish it to, and make its much-needed contribution to the housing market.

The third conclusion is that as there were some 165,000 such cases in 1987—up on the previous year—the country is suffering the grotesque waste of about £165 million per annum in futile and unnecessary court proceedings simply because the system—aided and abetted by local authorities' definition of homelessness—encourages tenants to break their contracts and stay put. That £165 million would buy a great deal of property and a great deal of accommodation.

My fourth conclusion is that the application of a so-called fair rent in such circumstances is wholly inappropriate and devastatingly unfair. There were some 474,000 registrations in 1987, and the trend is rising. That, too, will not encourage the revival of the private rented sector.

What is to be done? There is not the time to deploy a detailed analysis of the possibilities. My hon. Friend, who has seen the papers, may well have some excellent ideas. I am absolutely certain that the present state of the law and the manner of its enforcement are seriously inhibiting the contribution that can and should be made by one of the most flexible and effective segments of the housing market. In effect, the law is arbitrarily forcing the private householder to undertake the responsibilities of the social welfare apparatus of the state, often in circumstances where the income of the householder is less than the income of the tenant. It is also unfair to the many thousands of responsible and fair-minded tenants who would observe their contracts but who at present cannot find rented accommodation because the house owner, for the best of reasons, is not prepared to risk the virtual loss of his property or the vast expense of recovering it.

It is high time that the balance was redressed and a proper sense of equity restored to the housing market. One thing can be done straight away. I hope that my hon. Friend's Department will issue a directive to all local authorities as soon as possible saying that the Government will not tolerate the present policy of advising tenants in private accommodation to break their contracts in order to have themselves legally evicted and declared homeless. That would be a good start. We should then move on to the vexed question of rent registration, and devise a policy that will ensure that a case such as that which I have described this evening cannot happen again.

10.45 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Robert Key): I noted that in the debate on the Loyal Address my hon. Friend the Member for Havant (Sir I. Lloyd) said that it would be the last, or perhaps the second last, such debate in which he would participate. This is my second Adjournment debate at the Dispatch Box, and the first in which I have to reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Havant. I hope that it will not be his last debate, because he raised an important topic, and expressed his concerns very clearly on behalf of his constituents.

I was sorry to hear of the problems that my hon. Friend's constituents have experienced with repossessing their property. He will appreciate that it would be inappropriate for me to say how the law should have applied to their particular case. Nevertheless, I can offer general comments on the law and about our policy on private landlords and tenants.

Resident landlords who share with their tenants accommodation that is not self-contained no longer need a court to obtain possession, which is some progress.

From the details of Miss X's tenancy, it appears that she was a regulated tenant under the Rent Act 1977. Regulated tenants cannot be made to leave their home unless the landlord first obtains an order for possession on one of the grounds laid down in schedule 15 of that Act.

The grounds for possession, known as cases, include where the tenant is in arrears with rent or has damaged property or furniture. Provision was made in the Act for an absent landlord who lets his home with the intention of returning to live there again to claim possession under case 11 of schedule 15. Before the tenancy began, the landlord had to give a written notice saying that he might in future apply for possession under case 11. With the Housing Act 1980, we relaxed the repossession rules for absent landlords, by allowing them to let under protected shorthold tenancies. That guaranteed repossession of the property so long as the tenant was given three months' notice in writing.

Regulated tenants have the right to a fair rent registered by the rent officer. In assessing a fair rent, rent officers must follow the rules laid down in the 1977 Act. If either party disagrees with the rent officer's assessment, it can apply to the rent assessment committee, which, like the rent officer, is, by law, independent of Government. The committee will consider each case afresh and, applying the same rules, will reach its own assessment of a fair rent. That could be higher, lower or the same as the rent officer's assessment.

We are aware that levels of fair rent have been generally inadequate to provide many landlords with a reasonable return on their investment, or in some cases even to cover the cost of maintenance. There is no doubt that that has been a key factor in the decline in both the quality and supply of rented accommodation in recent decades.

The measures that we brought forward in the Housing Act 1988 were designed to stem the process of decline that we have seen throughout the century, and to bring private renting back into the mainstream of British housing. The 1988 Act created a statutory regime that could be seen as a sensible investment proposition rather than, as it appeared for so long under earlier legislation, an act of commercial lunacy.

The new regime rests on three fundamental propositions. First and foremost, the landlord must be free to charge a genuine market rent. Secondly, the landlord who cannot commit himself to letting long-term must be sure of an exit route at the point that he needs it. Thirdly, to the extent that the lettings market must operate within a statutory framework, it must be kept as simple as possible and must maintain an equitable balance between the interests of landlord and tenant.

Lettings by non-resident private landlords, granted on or after 15 January 1989, take the form of either assured or assured shorthold tenancies. Both types of letting take place on the basis of open market rents.

Assured tenants have indefinite security of tenure with the landlord being able to regain possession only under the grounds laid down in schedule 2 of the 1988 Act. Again, there is provision under ground 1 in schedule 2 for the absent landlord to claim repossession by serving notice in writing that it is his home, and that he intends to live there again.

The assured shorthold tenancy is designed to give the landlord far greater flexibility in letting his property. As a basic rule it must be granted for a fixed term of at least six months, and before the tenancy starts the landlord must have served a prescribed notice on the tenant, stating that it will be an assured shorthold. When the shorthold fixed term comes to an end, the landlord will be able either to offer the tenant a further fixed term, or let him remain in occupation on a longer-term basis under a statutory periodic tenancy. In the latter case, the landlord will have a continuing right to repossession at any time, subject to giving the tenant two months' notice.

When we introduced the 1988 Act, we decided that existing regulated tenants should retain their rights in respect of rents and security. I realise that that will be of little comfort to my hon. Friend's constituents. Many people, particularly the elderly, have lived in their accommodation a long time, and we considered that it would be wrong to remove the protection established for them under previous Acts. As I said, landlords of regulated tenants are not without legal means of repossessing their property. I recognise that my hon. Friend's constituents have attempted to pursue these avenues since their return from the Gulf. There is, of course, a procedure for dealing with complaints about the quality of legal advice through the Solicitors Complaints Bureau.

Although the 1988 Act made it easier and quicker, in a number of ways, for a landlord to obtain possession, it did not remove the general requirement on a landlord to seek possession through the courts. A requirement that the rights, duties and actions of both parties are examined in law is, we believe, a necessary precaution—given that people's homes are at stake—against the possibility of harassment and illegal eviction by unscrupulous landlords. Nevertheless, it is clear that court procedures should, wherever possible, offer a speedy and sure recompense for landlords taking action against unsatisfactory tenants. The Lord Chancellor's Department is introducing from next April a simpler and quicker procedure for claiming rent arrears, which will no longer require full legal representation for either landlord or tenant. That should help landlords faced with non-payment of rent, who at present often have to resort to full possession proceedings.

I recognise that going to court for other matters, such as repossession, can be a lengthy and expensive business. I can assure my hon. Friend that, in consultation with the Lord Chancellor's Department, we shall continue to give the fullest consideration to any other improvements in legal procedures which could be made for the benefit of a healthy private rented sector. I shall draw the attention of my noble Friend the Lord Chancellor to the difficulties experienced by my hon. Friend's constituents in taking the necessary legal action against their tenant.

It must be said that, as with all commercial debtors, it is not always possible to legislate against the very worst tenants. For new Housing Act tenancies it is now right that market rents can reflect the costs of wear and tear, and indeed the costs of insurance against the possibility of damage to the property.

As I said, the 1988 Act has also greatly improved landlords' rights to repossess their property, although balancing the interests of landlord and tenant has never been simple.

Last month my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning launched a new booklet designed to draw the attention of property owners to the 1988 Act. It outlines the advantages of the new measures on rents and security of tenure, and advises on some legal precautions that landlords might need to take, such as serving the correct notices for assured shorthold tenancies. In this, as in any business, it is best to adopt a professional approach, and the landlord with only one property may find it advisable to use a reputable managing agent with experience of housing legislation, who will also be able to check on the suitability of prospective tenants, and may well advise obtaining a security deposit to be held against the possibility of loss or damage.

I realise that this problem affects a large number of people. As my hon. Friend pointed out, there were 165,000 cases in 1987 alone. It is clearly a growing problem if we wish to see the revival of the private rented sector, which we most certainly do. One area that we in the Department of the Environment are pursuing is precisely why we think that this country has all the answers to the problems of a subsidised housing sector. That attitude is not shared by people in other countries of the European Community, or beyond. I have had to ask myself why, right at the beginning of this century, this country decided that the answer lay in municipalisation. Since then, there has been a steady decline in the private rented sector.

If we can find the right answers to those problems, we can begin to find the answers to bring about the revival of the private rented sector, which is so very important. We tend to forget that only in the past 25 years or so has it become uncommon for many young people to start their adult lives in private rented accommodation. I cannot speak for my hon. Friend the Member for Havant, but I began my married life in private rented accommodation, when that was regarded as perfectly normal. I expect that many people of my generation would agree with that.

What has gone wrong? The facts that my hon. Friend outlined give us some of the answers. One problem lies in the approach taken by people wishing to rent out their own property. I have noticed that there is a dearth of information, expertise and professional advice for people in the situation of my hon. Friend's constituents. People often take it upon themselves to find tenants for their properties. They cast their eyes around and light on the sort of person whom my hon. Friend described. That may, of course, lead to tears, as in this case.

So, what is to be done? Not everybody will immediately consult a professional for advice. People often fear the financial consequences of doing so. Perhaps they will not seek the advice of a professional managing agent. We have been involved in discussions with the National Federation of Housing Associations and I am glad to be able to tell my hon. Friend that some housing associations are now likely to be prepared to provide a managing service. That is a great step forward. Although it will be of little comfort to my hon. Friend's constituents, I hope that it will be widely welcomed when we are able to announce that such a

[Mr. Robert Key]

scheme is up and running across the country. I am grateful to the housing associations for the positive stance that they have taken.

As I said earlier, I have every sympathy with the case that my hon. Friend raised, but, on the face of it, it does not seem to have arisen as a result of the new legislation, which has been a great improvement. It is hard to see how, under the new legislation, the situation that he described would have arisen. The case appears to raise more general questions about the process of the law and we shall want to consider that further. As I said, I shall make representations to my right hon. Friend the Lord Chancellor.

I am sure that the measures for deregulating the private rented sector in the 1988 Act have gone a long way to redressing the unnatural balance that favoured difficult tenants in the Rent Acts, and thereby to encouraging people in the future to let out more property, to the mutual advantage of both landlord and tenant.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at one minute to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 20 November 1990

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

ADELPHI ESTATE BILL

LONDON DOCKLANDS RAILWAY BILL
Considered; to be read the Third time.

HEATHROW EXPRESS RAILWAY BILL *[Lords]*
Order for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time on Thursday.

Oral Answers to Questions

HEALTH

Children Act

1. **Mr. David Porter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress he is making in the implementation of the Children Act 1989.

The Minister for Health (Mrs. Virginia Bottomley): Our major programme of regulations, guidance and training continues to make good progress. We hope to launch the bulk of the guidance early in the new year.

Mr. Porter: Will my hon. Friend tell the House a little more about her Department's plans for the Act's training support programme?

Mrs. Bottomley: I am able to announce a substantial increase in the amount of money for training in social services generally. The training programme for the implementation of the Children Act is making good headway. I am pleased to be able to inform my hon. Friend that we are arranging training through the National Children's Bureau for those involved in the national health service. The first training event took place in East Anglia only last week. I hope that it will soon be available to NHS workers in my hon. Friend's constituency.

Mr. Bell: I am always glad to hear from the Minister that there are training programmes. However, as £3,000 million of Government money is to be used to offset the effects of the poll tax, can she assure the House that sufficient resources will be available fully to implement the Children Act in October 1991?

Mrs. Bottomley: I can give the hon. Gentleman that assurance. There has been a very good settlement for local authority personal social services this year which amounts to a 23·4 per cent. increase on last year's standard spending assessment. In addition, the training resources are ring-fenced. They go out in the form of specific grants for child care and for the implementation of the Children Act. We shall implement the Children Act in 327 days' time.

Mr. Devlin: Is my hon. Friend aware that I heard with some concern from a group of my constituents that the consultation documents sent out by her Department on the running of day nurseries were received in Cleveland only on the day that they were due to be responded to? Will my hon. Friend look into that and, if necessary, extend the time?

Mrs. Bottomley: I shall certainly look carefully at my hon. Friend's point. Only last month I attended a seminar in Newcastle at which local authorities, voluntary organisations and the private sector discussed precisely that guidance—that they should have inspected provision for child minders in play groups within three months and for day nurseries within six months. New guidance is important. We are funding the National Children's Bureau to produce material on that part of the Act. I certainly assure my hon. Friend that I shall look into the matter as it affects his part of the country.

Elderly (Day Care)

2. **Mr. Jack Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish the number of day care places per 1,000 of the elderly and very elderly population, by individual local authorities.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Stephen Dorrell): This information was published last July. A copy was placed in the Library.

Mr. Thompson: In view of that almost inadequate reply, will the Minister examine the responses from Labour-controlled county and shire councils and those from Tory-controlled county and shire councils? He will find that Labour-controlled county councils provide a far better service for the elderly. Does he understand that the Royal College of Nursing has expressed concern about inadequate transport arrangements and respite care, as well as the inadequacy of provision for those who live in rural areas?

Mr. Dorrell: I did not give every figure, because the hon. Gentleman asked for a figure for every local authority in England and Wales which would have taken some time to read to the House. He asked whether I am aware of the development of the service. He may know that the total number of day care places has risen by nearly 30 per cent. in 12 years and that the resources available to the Northumberland social services departments has risen by 55 per cent. in real terms in 12 years. The way that those resources are used is a matter for social services departments.

Mr. Steen: Does my hon. Friend agree that the most important thing is to ensure that old people can get about rather than be in day care? Is my hon. Friend aware that, unfortunately, elderly people in south Devon are hobbling about because the chiropody service has been cut and fewer sessions are available? Will my hon. Friend have a word with the chairman of the area health authority and say that before it cuts services at the sharp end, it should have a look at its own bureaucracy?

Mr. Dorrell: My hon. Friend is right to highlight the importance of chiropody services. They constitute an important part of proper community care. The exact prioritisation in an area is a matter for the health authority.

Mr. Frank Field: Does the Minister accept that as a result of the Government's postponement of their community care programme the number of day care places in the community may be declining? Is he aware that in Birkenhead, for example, the Vincent Harkness day care centre will be closing? What message would the Minister like me to take home to my constituents who may have only one choice—going into residential care—as a result of the Government's postponement of their plans?

Mr. Dorrell: I have already said that we recognise the importance of day care places and welcome the fact that over the past 12 years there has been an increase of 30 per cent. in their availability. They are a vital part of any proper community care policy. I do not accept that the phased introduction of community care need have a direct impact on the availability of places or on the way in which social services departments continue to use resources already at their disposal.

Neurosciences

3. **Mr. Peter Bottomley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health by what percentage the cost of transferring neurosciences from Shooter's Hill to Denmark Hill has risen since the decision was taken; and what proportion of the South East Thames regional annual capital budget this represents.

Mr. Dorrell: Nineteen per cent, Sir. The costs are borne over a period of time and not solely by the regional health authority.

Mr. Bottomley: Would I be right in saying that the capital budget for South East Thames is between £50 million and £60 million and that the cost of moving neurosciences four miles is between £50 million and £60 million? There are already six or seven neuroscience units in the inner London area and people in my constituency and further out would prefer to have services available to them. Will my hon. Friend confirm that, or shall I take up this matter with the chairman of South East Thames regional health authority before going to independent auditors?

Mr. Dorrell: My hon. Friend should take up any discontent with the chairman of the regional health authority. He should be aware that the reasoning for the concentration of neurosciences on the Maudsley site was that it was a more efficient use of clinical resources and involved lower cost. I suspect that neither of those considerations will have changed.

Hospital Beds

4. **Mr. Illsley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he is taking to avert the closure of hospital beds throughout the United Kingdom.

The Secretary of State for Health (Mr. William Waldegrave): It is for health authorities to determine the mix of health provision—including the number of hospital beds—which best meets the needs of their local population using the increased resources which the Government have made available to them. Next year will see the largest-ever increase in NHS funding, enabling the health service to continue to treat more people and expand its services.

Mr. Illsley: The Secretary of State is no doubt aware of the recent report of the National Association of Health Authorities and Trusts which forecast some 3,500 bed closures between now and next April. He is probably also aware that all hospital consultants in Sheffield have been told not to prescribe on to general practitioners' budgets in order to save money. Is not it a fact that the Government are passing the buck to health authorities, which are no longer accountable, and are blaming them for the cuts when the Government are simply not providing adequate funding for health authorities to carry out their duties?

Mr. Waldegrave: No, Sir, I do not accept that. As the figures show, the number of people treated goes on increasing from year to year. As the hon. Gentleman knows, the number of day care surgery cases has doubled since 1979 for medical reasons. That is largely why the beds continue to close.

Dame Jill Knight: May I congratulate my right hon. Friend on being appointed to his new position? When considering bed and ward closures, does he recognise that many of us believe that what is important is the treatment of patients, not furniture? Will he assure the House that when wards close and beds are moved, patients who need care will be taken care of elsewhere?

Mr. Waldegrave: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's welcome. The figures support what she says. The national health service, thanks to its employees, who do so well for us, continues to treat more patients every year, including in my hon. Friend's area.

Mr. Kennedy: Does not the Secretary of State realise that the report of the National Association of Health Authorities and Trusts, and the survey carried out by *The Independent* the day before, showed clearly that, in anticipation of next year's managerial structural changes, health authorities were being forced to close beds? It is quite false for him to say that the key indicator is the number of patients being treated, because all too often health authorities have moved patients from hospital care, sooner than normal, back into the community. Many of them have had to be re-admitted because they did not have sufficient hospital convalescence following surgical treatment. Should not we examine that figure, rather than the platitudes that the Secretary of State is offering?

Mr. Waldegrave: I read the surveys with care. It is worth noting that the report of the National Association of Health Authorities and Trusts to which the hon. Gentleman referred showed, by any inflation indicator, a real increase in resources available for the health service this year. That contradicts what Opposition Members have often said. The medical advice is against the hon. Gentleman. Before we took office the trend was already to keep people in hospital for less time. That is medically right.

Mr. Norris: I join in welcoming my right hon. Friend to his new position and express my pleasure that having me as his Parliamentary Private Secretary did not impede his career for too long—or at least I did not damage him as much as I did some of my other right hon. Friends. The

reality of bed closures is often the opposite of that suggested by the hon. Member for Barnsley, Central (Mr. Illsley). Beds have been closed in my health district and much public distress has been expressed as a result. But those bed closures are being announced now to achieve required budget savings by next April. The main reason is not a shortage of funds from the Department of Health but the inadequacies of the management of individual health districts. More health districts should address themselves to the subject.

Mr. Waldegrave: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's kind words. It is true that he has lost one or two Secretaries of State along the way, but he and I had a better relationship. What he says is perfectly true. It would be wrong for well-managed areas—Barnsley health district is managing well within its resources and has closed no beds for financial reasons—to be made to transfer resources to areas that may have tackled their problems with less resolution.

Mr. Robin Cook: May I congratulate the Secretary of State on his appointment to the Cabinet and share the hope that he will still be in it after 6.30 pm? While he is still with us, will he try to face the realities? Has no one told him that some hospitals will not carry out any routine surgery for the rest of the financial year? Has no one told him that the NAHAT survey found that only 2 per cent. of closures were planned rationalisations and that 98 per cent. were emergency closures to balance the books in time for next April's changes? As those changes are doing so much harm to the national health service, why does not he take the opportunity of this interregnum to put back the lid on changes which came in with the present Prime Minister and should go with her?

Mr. Waldegrave: I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's welcome, although I am not so grateful for the fact that he is playing the old gramophone record which he has been playing for the past two or three years and will continue to play for the next two or three years from the position that he now occupies. Every year the health service goes on treating more people. I shall not deny that in some places in the health service beds are being closed for financial reasons, but it would be wrong for us to say that those who are trying to achieve their planned budget spending should not be encouraged to do so, because that is the basis of a well-managed service.

Mr. Hayes: I warmly welcome my right hon. Friend to his new job and I know that he will be a great success. Does he accept that the best way to prevent bed closures is for the money to travel with the patient—which I hope will happen from next April? Does my right hon. Friend accept that he will have to take some tough decisions, particularly in the Thames region where the capital programmes have collapsed? My right hon. Friend must understand that constituencies such as mine, which has the worst waiting lists in the country and where children's wards are being closed, must be assisted if the excellent reforms that will come on stream next year are to mean anything.

Mr. Waldegrave: My hon. Friend is right. The reforms will help to take the money to where the patients are and will help to reward hospitals that are successful and treat many patients. The present system works in exactly the opposite direction. I am well aware—this is the first thing of which anyone holding my office would be aware—that there is, as usual, a special London problem which has not been sorted out for decades. We shall have to sort it out before too long.

Health Service Funding

5. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he is taking to ensure that adequate resources are available to meet the need for *(a)* health service provision and *(b)* community care as a result of demographic changes.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We shall increase resources for the national health service in the United Kingdom by £3·2 billion in 1991-92. At the same time, the standard spending figure for local authorities' personal social services will rise by 23 per cent.

Mr. Michael: Does the hon. Lady recognise that Ministers are continually playing the old record which was left behind by the Secretary of State's predecessor? Since 1982, inflation in the health service has been 49·9 per cent., compared with a less than 35 per cent. increase in the retail prices index. Do the Government recognise that the health service is treading water where it is not drowning, that demographic changes and the increasing numbers of elderly people are flooding over our services and that it is not enough to mouth platitudes? Resources are needed if community care is to be more than merely moving people out of institutions and if it is to mean providing adequate services for carers and those who are cared for in the community. Can we have the resources so that the job can be done?

Mrs. Bottomley: This is the largest ever increase in resources for the national health service—a cash increase of one third over the past three years. I recall that when the Labour party was last in power, long ago, the total cost of the health service was £8 billion. There has been an extra £8 billion in the past three years alone. As for demographic factors, over the past 10 years the number of elderly people has increased by 8·4 per cent. Hon. Gentlemen might like to know that over that period the number of geriatric in-patients increased by 75 per cent.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton *rose——[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. There is an air of excitement this afternoon which I fail to understand.

Mr. Winterton: I am grateful for the reception by the House, but I am not on the ballot paper upstairs——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member is on the ballot paper here.

Mr. Winterton: Does my hon. Friend agree that it is unacceptable for 50 beds to be closed in a relatively new, modern district general hospital in Macclesfield when there are surgeons and consultants waiting to carry out treatment and operations, theatres available for those operations and waiting lists of people wanting operations? The Mersey regional health authority has allocated insufficient resources to Macclesfield, given the growing number of elderly people and the growing population of the area.

Mrs. Bottomley: The enemy of the health service is waste. It is a waste not to have people fully using the skills that they have been trained to deploy. It is a major

challenge to health authorities to live within their resources. We take great pride in the substantial increase in resources that we have provided for the health service, but we do not underestimate the financial and management skills that health authorities need to deploy so that they do not let their work outstrip the resources to meet that work. We need further improvements in that area.

Mr. Rooker: The Minister will agree that the demographic changes make a difficult situation far worse, so it is more important than ever to look at the way in which resources are moved about. How is it possible that Exeter health authority seems to have lost £60 million, which was released by the sale of two psychiatric hospitals at Digby and at Exminster, not £1 of which has gone into community care for the mentally ill? How is it possible that the Midland nerve hospital has closed a psychiatric ward with a staff of 15 who have been replaced by only three staff working in the community? Where have all those resources gone? Local people cannot find the information and they have been told that it is not available locally. We presume, therefore, that the information is available centrally. Can we be told?

Mrs. Bottomley: I welcome the hon. Gentleman to his new role. He will know that there is concern about the extent to which provision for the mentally ill has kept up with our wishes and expectations. That is why my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State has responsibility for the specific grant for the mentally ill which will commence next April. Next year, £30 million will be spent by local authorities, with the agreement of health authorities, to ensure that there is close collaboration in the provision of services for the mentally ill. Over the past 10 years, there has been almost a doubling in the number of places in homes for the mentally ill. We believe that there is scope for further provision by social services to ensure that they do as well with the mentally ill as, in many cases, they have with the mentally handicapped.

In-patients

6. **Mr. David Davis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the number of in-patients being treated by the national health service at the present time; and how many were treated in 1979.

Mr. Dorrell: Almost 7·5 million in-patient cases were treated in 1989-90 compared with just over 6 million in 1979. That is a rise of almost 25 per cent.

Mr. Davis: I thank my hon. Friend for that answer because it nails the nonsensical assertion from some Opposition Members, and from my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton), about cuts in the health service. It shows that there has been a dramatic increase in the health service provided to the people of the United Kingdom. Will my hon. Friend also nail that lie, for the benefit of my constituents, by telling me the figures for Scunthorpe health authority?

Mr. Dorrell: My hon. Friend is exactly right. The figures demonstrate that the national health service is growing each year that the Government are in power. I am pleased to be able to tell my hon. Friend that the number of patients treated in his constituency has risen at a compound rate of 5 per cent. per annum.

Mr. Wigley: Does the Minister accept that although there has been an increase in the number of in-patients treated, there may have been an even greater demand? Are those in need of in-patient treatment receiving the treatment that they need or are they being turfed out of hospitals before they are ready and being directed towards private health care provision in a way which they would not have been in 1979?

Mr. Dorrell: In 1979, the in-patient waiting lists was 5 per cent. higher than it is now. It simply is not true to say that the shorter time in a hospital bed is a reflection of the fact that peope are being pushed out into the community. It is a reflection of the refinement of medical practice and of less traumatic medicine which means higher-quality patient care.

Mr. Sims: Is not it a fact that the improvement in medical techniques to which my hon. Friend referred means that many treatments that involved in-patient care in 1979 can now be achieved through out-patient care? Are not the out-patient figures even more relevant to the arguments on this point and on the whole question of hospital beds?

Mr. Dorrell: My hon. Friend is precisely right. There is also an interim category of day cases—people who would previously have had to stay in hospital, in many cases for several days, and in some cases for several weeks. They are now treated as day cases. The number of day cases treated by the national health service has more than doubled since 1979.

Dental Treatment

7. **Mr. Ronnie Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action is being taken by his Department to ensure that all areas have access to national health service dental treatment.

Mr. Dorrell: The Department operates a scheme offering financial incentives to dentists to set up in shortage areas.

Mr. Campbell: Will the Minister guarantee the people of the north-east of England a dental service within the health service or are we seeing another way of privatising the dental service?

Mr. Dorrell: Yes, Sir and no, Sir.

Mr. Hill: Is my hon. Friend aware that many dentists are wrestling with their consciences while considering whether they should go for more private practice than NHS practice? My dentist is one of those who finds himself in that predicament. There must be more inducement for dentists to stay with the NHS than there has been previously. They are very inclined to go private.

Mr. Dorrell: I read the same newspaper articles as my hon. Friend and I am obviously concerned by them. We have a choice between believing the *Daily Mirror* or the British Dental Association. The BDA has stated:

"the public should have no difficulty in finding an NHS dentist in any part of the country."

That surely is the important assurance that I gave the hon. Member for Blyth Valley (Mr. Campbell).

Mr. Holt: Will my hon. Friend take it from me that in the north-east of England there is an adequate supply of dentists, and excellent dentists? The thing that is putting off dentists at present is the amount of paperwork that they are having to complete in accordance with their new contracts. Will my hon. Friend consider that? The system needs streamlining urgently.

Mr. Dorrell: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend that we should always be reviewing the paperwork and bureaucratic requirements of the NHS to ensure that they are at the minimum. We must ensure also that there is a sufficient flow of information to allow management to discharge its tasks effectively.

Ms. Abbott: Is the Minister aware that the terms of the new dental contract make it increasingly uneconomic to practice NHS dentistry in London and that the majority of dentists in London and the south-east voted against the contract for that reason? My constituents are finding increasingly that their dentists are moving over to entirely private work. Is the Minister further aware that many dentists and many other members of the public feel that the Government are trying to introduce the privatisation of the dental service through the back door?

Mr. Dorrell: I repeat not my words but those of the BDA, which stated that

"the public should have no difficulty in finding an NHS dentist in any part of the country."

The hon. Lady is an unlikely exponent of the point of view that £30,000 a year is not a decent living wage.

Hospital Trusts

8. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will visit those hospitals in Liverpool which have made proposals for hospital trust status in order to obtain at first hand the views of the staff.

Mr. Waldegrave: I have no immediate plans to visit the hospitals in Liverpool that have applied for trust status.

Mr. Wareing: How can a Government who claim to believe in democracy ignore the wishes of the Liverpool people, as shown in a recent survey carried out by the Liverpool community health council? It revealed that 88 per cent. of staff in hospitals in Liverpool and over 92 per cent. of the public in Liverpool find the concept of opted-out hospitals entirely alien to their idea of a health service. Might not the Prime Minister, if that is what the right hon. Lady remains after 6.30 pm, try out her new-found belief in referendums by going to the people of Liverpool and carrying out a referendum in that city, where no councillors and no Members of Parliament believe in the Government's extreme right-wing doctrines?

Mr. Waldegrave: It would be absurd to have referenda on management changes within the NHS. It is not surprising that the hon. Gentleman and his colleagues have managed to scare many people in Liverpool, as others have scared people elsewhere. For example, the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman), who I think is an Opposition Front-Bench spokesman, issued a press handout about hospitals opting out of the NHS. No hospitals are opting out of the NHS.

Mr. Alton: Given the misunderstandings that many have about opting out or trust status, is not there a need for the Secretary of State to go to places such as Liverpool to explain his plans? Many are fearful that if the Liverpool royal hospital in my constituency or the Alder Hey children's hospital, which has an international reputation, were in some way to be separated from the NHS, they would not be available to ordinary people and would not provide them with the care that they have always provided in the past. If there is a misunderstanding, why does not the Secretary of State come to Liverpool to explain in person the proposals to those who will be affected by them?

Mr. Waldegrave: There are 66 applications for trust status and we must approve them or not approve them shortly. It would not be practicable for me to visit all those hospitals before I have to take those decisions. It is important that the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) accepts, as I hope that the hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing) accepts, that it is his duty to get rid of the nonsense that has been spread around. I am sure that the hon. Member for Mossley Hill, who is an independent-minded man, will help us to do that.

General Practitioners

9. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the average number of patients and income of general practitioners in England and Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: On 1 October 1989, the latest date for which information is available, the average number of patients on a GP's list in England and Wales was 1,962 —14 per cent. fewer than in 1979. The intended average net income for GPs is currently £33,280 and will rise to £34,680 from 1 January 1991.

Mr. Hind: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that since the introduction of the new contract and over the past few years, GPs have had fewer patients on their lists and will therefore have more time to treat them? Will he also confirm that as a consequence of the new contract, GPs' incomes will increase, so in no way can it be said that their standard of living has been eroded?

Mr. Waldegrave: I can confirm what my hon. Friend says. I remind the House that many statements were made about the effect of the new GP contract and a lot of words will have to be eaten, particularly by Opposition Front-Bench Members. The figures already coming through show dramatic rises, for example, in the immunisation of children, which I do not think would have been achieved without the contract, which is already working well.

Mr. Kirkwood: How many applications have there been from general practices in England and Wales for budget-holding status? How many of them came from rural areas? When will the Secretary of State make an announcement about those that he will approve?

Mr. Waldegrave: The number is about 350, with a similar number, or rather more, expressing interest for the

future. I cannot give the hon. Gentleman the breakdown between rural and urban now, but I shall write to him about that.

11. **Mr. Couchman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the effect of the new general practitioner contract on the amount of time spent in consultation with patients.

18. **Mr. Hague:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what recent representations he has received about the new contract for general practitioners.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: A recent survey published in the medical press suggested that 54 per cent. of GPs have spent more time in patient contact since the introduction of the GPs' new contract. In recent months there has been a dramatic reduction in the volume of correspondence received on the GP contract.

Mr. Couchman: When the new contract was negotiated, doctors expressed much concern about targets for cervical cytology and immunisation. Does my hon. Friend have figures to show the percentage and number of doctors who are achieving those targets? Has the number of home visits undertaken by doctors personally rather than through agency services increased since the new contract was agreed?

Mrs. Bottomley: My hon. Friend rightly highlights the misleading and mischievous statements that were made at the time. The hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) said:

"The targets . . . for screening for cervical cancer—are so heroic, so far beyond the present figure for most practices, that there is a danger that many doctors will simply give up trying."—[*Official Report*, 25 July 1989; Vol. 157, c. 960.]

That shows, as ever, that the Opposition think so little of people and are the doom-mongers and gloom merchants.

I shall give my hon. Friend the figures that he requested: 54 per cent. of GPs are already hitting the higher target for cytology—the majority are hitting the higher target. A further 35 per cent. are hitting the lower target as well and that is very encouraging. A similar story applies to immunisation. The remuneration on home visits, whereby if a GP carries out his own home visit at night, he receives about £45, but if he uses a deputising service, he receives £15, has meant that GPs are more willing to undertake their own home visits.

Mr. Hague: Does my hon. Friend agree that one of the likely reasons for the reduction in correspondence on this subject is that the contract is now a great deal more popular and more widely accepted, not only among GPs but among patients, than it was when it was first proposed? Is not one of the reasons for that that patients have more information about the services that are available to them than they have ever had before? *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Allen: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Could we have some quiet? There is a lot of last-minute canvassing on Conservative Benches. These are important Health questions.

Mr. Speaker: I have to say that the noise comes from the hon. Member's side of the House as well—*[Interruption.]* However, I thank the hon. Member for drawing his point of order to my attention. It gives me the opportunity to say that we should listen to Health questions in silence.

Mrs. Bottomley: The GP contract is a great success, partly because it has been backed by resources. In the part of the world of my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Hague), there has been a 20 per cent. increase in practice staff over the past year and a 65 per cent. increase in practice nurses. He will know that in his part of the country the average GP list size has come down from 2,000 to 1,700. Certainly, his point is important. The GP contract means that more information is made available through practice leaflets and the local directory of services. Patients are better informed. They are treated like partners by the GPs. It is a success for the GPs and a success for the patients.

Mr. Tony Banks: The Minister mentioned cervical cancer a moment ago. Is she aware that the research unit at Hammersmith hospital, which is looking into breast cancer, now faces closure because of the inability to get £150,000 a year to continue its work, when her Department spent £147,000 on hospitality last year? Will not she say that it is a most inappropriate use and misallocation of resources and that she will keep the Hammersmith breast cancer unit open?

Mrs. Bottomley: Clearly, as the first country in the European Community with a national call and recall system both for cervical cytology and for breast cancer, we are determined to reduce the number of avoidable deaths by cancer, particularly cancers affecting women. We have not had an application from the Hammersmith unit. We have been in touch with it to see whether there is any way in which we can assist.

Child Abuse

12. **Mr. Arbuthnot:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he is taking to protect children from abuse and neglect.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We are deeply concerned about all incidents of child abuse and attach a high priority to tackling it. Legislation that clarifies and simplifies the existing child care law is on the statute book. It will be implemented in October 1991.

Mr. Arbuthnot: Does my hon. Friend accept that child abuse is a problem which causes appalling conflicts between local authorities and families—conflicts which are often insoluble? Does she accept the need for up-to-date practice guidance to help with those problems?

Mrs. Bottomley: My hon. Friend hits exactly the point about child abuse. The new Children Act 1989 ensures that there is proper, paramount consideration of the needs of the child and also recognition of the responsibilities of parents and the role of local authorities. Our guidance document, "Working Together", which was produced after the Cleveland report, clarifies and provides advice for the various agencies in their co-operation together. We shall be updating it in the new year and, in particular, drawing attention to the need to recognise the role, responsibilities and rights of parents.

Mr. Allen: Will the Minister please look again at the possibility of the establishment of a national centre for research into the abuse of children and sexual abuse, in particular—*[Interruption.]*—so that perpetrators and victims can be examined in great depth?

Mr. Roger King: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I cannot hear because of the noise.

Mr. Allen: Will the Minister look at that question, which I first raised with the Prime Minister two years ago, so that, for a small amount of money, we can ensure that real progress is made on that important issue?

Mrs. Bottomley: I shall certainly give high priority to the development of services for those who have been abused and, indeed, for abusers. A major training programme is under way. We work in collaboration with a great number of voluntary organisations, for example, the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, the National Children's Bureau, the National Children's Home and many others. Only recently we identified an additional sum, particularly for the development of services for those who have been the victims of sexual abuse and for the perpetrators of abuse.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: Does my hon. Friend agree that a lot of heartache has been caused to parents, because some of the guidelines contained in "Working Together" are still not being observed either by local authorities or by the professional organisations representing some of the professionals involved in case conferences? When she reviews "Working Together", will she ensure that the new guidance is strictly observed by local authorities and professional organisations?

Mrs. Bottomley: Yes, that is correct. Those involved in child abuse cases should give paramount consideration to the welfare of the child. Many children's lives were lost some years ago because the workers were so busy working with the parents that they almost forgot to focus on the child. The pendulum has now swung the other way and there is concern that parents' interests are not being properly regarded. I can most certainly give my hon. Friend the assurance that the new issue of "Working Together" will properly identify the on-going responsibility of parents.

Residential Care

13. **Mr. Bernie Grant:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he is taking to ensure that persons in residential care are enabled to have individual rooms if they so desire.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: That is a matter for local authorities. To assist local authorities, we have issued guidance that makes it clear that residents should have the choice of single rooms wherever that is preferred and practicable.

Mr. Grant: Is the Minister aware that thousands of residents in care homes have to share a room and that in some cases there are four or five people to a room? How would she like to have to share a room in her old age with four or five other people? What is she going to do about it? Is she aware of the two major reports that have been published, the Wagner report and the Home Life report, which both state that it is highly desirable that elderly people should have individual rooms? Is she further aware of the representations that have been made by organisations such as the Royal College of Nursing, which said that in old age, residents of such homes need choice, dignity and to be cared for properly? What will the Minister do about all this?

Mrs. Bottomley: It is my intention and hope to share my room with one person in my old age, but perhaps with no more. We are intent on improving standards in residential care homes. We have a training initiative to improve the quality of care. New inspection units were established by local authorities this April and it will be important that local authorities meet the standards that they have been setting for the private sector for many years. Our community care plans should ensure that proper support is provided in the community as well as residential support being provided, where appropriate, for those who need it.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Mr. Speaker: Questions to the Prime Minister—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear".]—Order. No. 1, Mr. McAvoy.

Q1. **Mr. McAvoy:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 20 November.

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John MacGregor): Mr. Speaker —*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I understand that the Lord President has been asked to reply.

Mr. MacGregor: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is attending the conference on security and co-operation in Europe, in Paris.

Mr. McAvoy: Does the Leader of the House accept that with the Tory party split from top to bottom in an orgy of bitterness, animosity and hatred, it is proving that it is patently unfit to govern? Bearing in mind the present Prime Minister's new-found enthusiasm for referendums, will the Leader of the House urge him to resign and call the only referendum that matters—a general election—to give the people an opportunity to elect a Labour Prime Minister?

Mr. MacGregor: We have just had the debate on the Address and the legislative programme in which the Government secured a very large majority of 108. That is a firm rebuttal of the hon. Gentleman's point. We have a full and important legislative programme and we shall be getting on with it, as the House wants us to do. I do not know why the hon. Gentleman raised that point, because when the general election comes and the focus turns to his leader and the Labour party's policies, I have no doubt that the Conservative party will have a fourth considerable victory.

Q2. **Mr. Jack:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 20 November.

Mr. MacGregor: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Jack: Can my right hon. Friend confirm that the excellent European arms reduction treaty could not have

been achieved under the weak, indecisive and divided policies advocated by the Opposition? Can he further confirm that the defence of the realm remains a key objective of the Government and that the aerospace workers in Lancashire will have a full part to play in that?

Mr. MacGregor: My hon. Friend is absolutely right in what he says. It was because the Government—under the leadership of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister—and other Governments in the west were resolute about defence and maintained an effective nuclear deterrent that the Soviet Union realised that it could not win militarily. When a Soviet leader arose with the courage and vision of Mr. Gorbachev, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister was the first to recognise that and to encourage him in the process of reform and disarmament, which was so triumphantly sealed yesterday. That treaty is of major significance for the future of Europe. My hon. Friend is also right to stress the role of British Aerospace. I am sure that it will continue to have an important role.

Mr. Hattersley *rose*——

Hon. Members: What is your leader doing?

Mr. Hattersley: I can tell hon. Members exactly what my right hon. Friend is doing—he is enjoying the undivided support of his party.

Will the Leader of the House accept our congratulations on the Government's refusal to provide £10 million to fund the city technology college in the Prime Minister's borough? When shall we have a statement on the Government's general climbdown on CTCs?

Mr. MacGregor: There is no climbdown on city technology colleges. We have a clear programme—15 have been either announced or are well in the pipeline. What is more, the CTCs already in existence are proving not only extremely effective in raising standards in inner-urban areas, but extremely popular with parents. They all have very large waiting lists.

Mr. Hattersley: If there is no general climbdown on CTCs, what significance should we read into the Prime Minister having been picked out for special punishment in that particular? Is not it true that the Government's policy is in shambles in yet another area and that the country now faces all the problems of a lame duck Prime Minister leading a lame duck Government?

Mr. MacGregor: That was a shambles of an attack. Our CTC policy is continuing and the CTCs are proving very popular. As the former Secretary of State for Education and Science, I recently announced consultations on a new CTC—which I believe will be very good—in the Bristol area. In each case, we must consider the obtaining of sufficient funds from sponsors and the matching of sponsors with sites in appropriate inner-urban areas. It is not true that the CTC programme is crumbling.

Q3. **Mr. Ashby:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 20 November.

Mr. MacGregor: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Ashby: Has my right hon. Friend noticed the absence of the Leader of the Opposition? Could he possibly be attending any summit meeting and, if so, would he be advocating his policies of 1983 or his policies of 1990?

Mr. MacGregor: Not the least of the achievements of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is that the Opposition have changed so many of their policies—for example, on Europe, on the economy and in many other respects. That is a clear sign of the Government's success with our policies during recent years.

Mr. Flannery: I know that the Leader of the House must be worried about matters other than Question Time, but will he address himself to the position from which he was recently removed, that of Secretary of State for Education and Science? Does he realise that the CTCs, which were mentioned by my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), together with the assisted places scheme, are costing more than the £500 million that he recently wrung from the Treasury? Does he accept that both those schemes are an insult to British education? Only a few parents are lucky enough to feel able to support them, while the remainder of education suffers from the siphoning off of public money into private education.

Mr. MacGregor: For a start, the hon. Gentleman's figures are completely wrong. The two programmes to which he referred cost a good deal less than £500 million. I know that he will have noticed the proposals in the autumn statement to increase spending on education next year by more than £3,000 million. That is a clear sign of the priority that we give to education. The CTC programme and the assisted places programme are two of the many means by which we are raising standards and extending parental choice.

Q4. **Mr. Stern:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 20 November.

Mr. MacGregor: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Stern: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the Government's policy towards Europe has been vindicated by the success of the conference on security and co-operation in Europe, held in Paris? Does he further agree that the direction of future policy must lead to greater co-operation across the entire continent of Europe rather than to a retreat into a tight economic unit covering less than half of it?

Mr. MacGregor: I very much agree with my hon. Friend. As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said in Paris yesterday

"We would hope to see east and central European countries join the Council of Europe. And in the slightly longer term we would also hope to see them join the European Community when they are ready and want to do so".

My hon. Friend is also right to talk about a wider, open Europe. As a former Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, I believe that the lead that my right hon. Friend gave—*[Interruption.]* I was pleased to play my part in the reform of the common agricultural policy. The lead that my right hon. Friend gave in trying to get a united European position on the GATT Uruguay round has been most important.

Q4. Mr. Nellist: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 20 November.

Mr. MacGregor: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Nellist: Is the Lord President of the Council aware that my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) was outside Committee Room 12 this morning at 10 o'clock when he conducted a most authoritative exit poll of a certain contest? Among the first—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman may well have been there, but the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) should relate his question to Government responsibilities.

Mr. Nellist: Among the first 200 Tory MPs who emerged, 200 admitted to voting for the Prime Minister and 200 admitted to voting for the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine). With all the duplicity and general savagery of the past few days, does the Lord President agree that it would be better to follow the advice of my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Rutherglen (Mr. McAvoy) and call a general election? Instead of 350 Tory Members of Parliament deciding a political talent contest, 40 million people could pass verdict on the past 11 years of Thatcherism.

Mr. MacGregor: I have already dealt with the general election point. The hon. Gentleman has highlighted the fact that, as ever, the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) not only gets his facts and dates wrong, but has an extremely vivid imagination.

Mr. Skinner: It was a proper authentic exit poll.

Mr. MacGregor: We shall see.

I am grateful to the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist), as he has reminded me that I have still to vote, which I hope to do in about five minutes.

Q6. Mr. Gerald Howarth: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 20 November.

Mr. MacGregor: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Howarth: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the fact that in excess of 7 million people have already registered to buy electricity shares demonstrates the continuing and overwhelming public interest in popular capitalism, as espoused by the Conservative party alone under the leadership of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister? Does he also agree that today's 11 million popular capitalists have everything to fear from the return of an expropriating Labour party?

Mr. MacGregor: I agree with my hon. Friend. There is no doubt that one of the many successes of the past 11 years of Conservative rule has been the wider spread not only of share ownership but of property ownership. It has been clear for many years that the wider spread of ownership is not a concept in which the Opposition believe.

Mr. Clelland: Following the earlier remarks of the Leader of the House about Labour party policy, may I ask whether he is aware that at the weekend the Prime Minister accused the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) of pursuing Labour party policy? Could that be why the right hon. Gentleman is so much further ahead in public opinion than the right hon. Lady?

Mr. MacGregor: That was a reference—*[Interruption.]* If one reads what the Prime Minister said one sees that it was a reference to one or two aspects of economic policy in relation to intervention in industry. If one examines the totality of our policies on the economy, one sees that my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) in his remarks was totally in support of the Prime Minister and that in a wide range of other policies there is a great deal of unity on Conservative Benches and a great deal of opposition to the policies being pursued by the Labour party.

Q8. Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 20 November.

Mr. MacGregor: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Thurnham: Does the Leader of the House agree that one of the many achievements of the Prime Minister has been to set up the Audit Commission? Does he further agree that it is extraordinary that the Opposition want to abolish it simply because it is exposing massive waste and inefficiency in town halls, with over £1·3 billion of savings already identified?

Mr. MacGregor: I wish that I could agree with my hon. Friend that it was extraordinary behaviour on the part of the Labour party. Sadly, it is all too typical, and I was horrified by the reputed remarks of the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett), that the Audit Commission's

"unhelpful undermining of local authority initiatives undoubtedly mean its days are numbered".

The Audit Commission has shown how local authority services can be improved, with the charge payer being saved about £1·3 billion, and has shown how waiting lists in hospitals can be cut by a third at no extra cost. So Labour's action over the Audit Commission carries this single message for charge payers and taxpayers everywhere, "It has money to burn—yours."

Orders of the Day

Criminal Justice Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

3.31 pm

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. David Waddington): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Mr. Speaker: I have selected the amendment standing in the name of the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Waddington: The Bill is an important reforming measure which sets out to increase society's confidence in the criminal justice and penal system and its effectiveness in dealing with offenders.

It creates a more coherent statutory framework for sentencing, based on the seriousness of the offence that has been committed. That, along with sentencing guidelines by the Court of Appeal, the power of the Attorney-General to take over-lenient sentences to the Court of Appeal and the work of the Judicial Studies Board, should make for much greater consistency in sentencing. I said "consistency" not "uniformity", which is argued for, extraordinarily enough, in the reasoned amendment. I put that down to no more than a schoolboy howler, because I cannot believe that that is what is intended.

The Bill reforms the parole system to ensure that those who are sent to prison will generally spend a greater proportion of their sentence in custody and will be supervised on release. The Bill contains proposals on children's evidence which will ensure that those who abuse children will not be able to hide behind difficulties that their victims now face in going to court.

The Bill also includes measures designed to reinforce parental responsibility and finally, and on a different theme, we are taking the opportunity to provide for the putting out to tender of police and prison escort duties and security in magistrates courts so that police and prison officers can concentrate on their real work; the Bill proposes to give the private sector the opportunity to tender for the running of the new remand centre at Everthorpe—now called Wolds.

Many of those proposals are radical, but all are built on firm foundations. As for the Bill's sentencing framework, we are in many respects setting out to extend over the whole age range the requirements imposed on the courts so far as young offenders are concerned in the Criminal Justice Acts 1982 and 1988, requirements which have already led to substantially fewer young people being given custodial sentences. The proposals on parole and children's evidence implement the recommendations of thorough and detailed reports of reviews held by Lord Carlisle of Bucklow and by His Honour Judge Pigot respectively. The proposals on private sector involvement in the remand system are also based on extensive research and consultation.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): The Home Secretary referred to the involvement of private security firms. As the personnel policies of many of those companies are, to say the least, unsavoury, will he give an assurance that one of the requirements imposed by the Home Office will be that none of the companies should be subscribers to the Economic League and other black listing organisations and he will seek an assurance, before issuing contracts, that that will be the case?

Mr. Waddington: I draw the hon. Gentleman's attention to the Bill, wherein are set out the most detailed provisions to ensure that the service provided is excellent and that, within the organisation, there will be a Government official, a monitor as it were, to ensure that the higher standards are maintained.

The circumstances of cases that come before the courts are almost infinitely various. Therefore, when one comes to sentencing, consistency of approach, rather than uniformity of outcome, must be the aim: therefore, I have had no difficulty in resisting any temptation to impose detailed and rigid sentencing rules upon the courts, such as would require particular offences to be sentenced within only a narrow range of options. But it is right that Parliament should guide the courts on the general principles to be adopted.

Fairness and consistency are paramount in the administration of justice. Therefore, there can be no place, in a criminal justice system worthy of that name, for any sort of discrimination on grounds of race, colour, creed or sex. Any such discrimination would be utterly inimical to the principles of justice on which the system is founded, and I believe that the more consistent framework provided in the Bill will enable those principles to be upheld. All the agencies that work in the criminal justice system are committed to policies and practices to achieve that aim.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): Will the Home Secretary say whether he has any objection at this stage to accepting the recommendation of the criminal Bar that there should be a declaratory provision to ensure that his objectives on racial discrimination are met?

Mr. Waddington: I certainly have no objection in principle—how could one, if one were talking only of a clause in the Bill that was declaratory and stated what the present law was? Even if it went further than that, the subject is obviously something which could be usefully debated in Committee. I hope that the hon. Gentleman is satisfied with that.

Secondly, the aim of the proposals is to deal with offenders and stop crime more effectively. We expect our proposals to lead to a fall in the use of imprisonment and therefore to a fall in the prison population. This is obviously to be welcomed and I expect it to happen, although the numbers involved are, in the nature of things, difficult to estimate. But I do not want there to be any misunderstanding. This is certainly not a measure designed to achieve some artificial short-term reduction in prison numbers at the expense of proper protection for the public.

Instead, the Bill's proposals are part of the Government's wider strategy for tackling crime more effectively. The probation service will have a central role in implementing the Bill's proposals for pre-sentence reports, community penalties and post-custody supervision of offenders. We shall set national standards for these matters and our Green Paper, "Supervision and Punishment in the Community", published in February this year, set out a number of options for improving the responsiveness of the probation service to the demands that it is likely to face. We shall also support it with the necessary resources.

No one can doubt the effectiveness of the Government's support for other parts of the criminal justice system, given the investment of money and ideas that we have put into police manpower and resources, the prison service, crime prevention and support for victims.

Mr. Meriyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): The probation service is dealt with in the Green Paper and in the Bill, but I was at a conference of magistrates in Birmingham on Saturday at which delegates asked me about financial resources, given that the service attracts an 80 per cent. grant. They were worried that, because of financial restraints on local authorities, there will not be enough money to support the work of the probation service. Were they wrong?

Mr. Waddington: There will be a 27 per cent. increase in funding over the next three years. I remind the right hon. Gentleman of an interesting passage at the back of the White Paper which deals with resources. We have always acknowledged that if these proposals succeed there will have to be an expanded probation service—not the reverse.

The Bill clearly states that the basic principle should be that the punishment should be commensurate with the seriousness of the offence, but our plain duty is to protect the public and in certain cases a tougher sentence than that warranted by the seriousness of the offence may be justified by the need to protect the public from serious harm—and that is provided for.

If an offender has already been punished for a previous offence it seems unfair and unjust to punish him twice over by increasing the penalty for a subsequent offence; it seems wrong that petty offenders should be imprisoned merely because they have committed petty offences previously. But we must face up to why such offenders sometimes finish up in prison now. That happens, I fear, because until now community penalties have often not been perceived as real punishments and so long as community penalties continue to be perceived as a bit of a let-off, sentencers will inevitably be tempted to say to the offenders, "Well, you got away with it last time, but you did not learn your lesson, so this time we will give you a taste of real punishment—prison."

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South) *rose*——

Mr. Waddington: I certainly do not blame sentencers who have sometimes taken this view in the past, since it is clear that in some respects community penalties have not been as rigorous as they should have been. Moreover, the range of community penalties has not been wide enough to provide suitable punishment for all offenders who could otherwise have been dealt with effectively in the community.

I find it difficult to understand why some of the people who are in favour of less use of custody do not seem to recognise that rigorous and demanding community penalties must be provided if that aim is to be achieved.

Mr. Alun Michael (Cardiff, South and Penarth) *rose*——

Mr. Cryer *rose*——

Mr. Waddington: I shall give way to the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) in a moment, but I want to finish this passage because it is an important one.

The public certainly will not put up with a slap on the wrist as an adequate response to relatively serious offending. Hence, there will be a wider range of community penalties—and combinations of them—which can make tough demands on offenders and offer the courts what they and the public will recognise as an adequate response to criminal behaviour.

Mr. Cryer: Does the Secretary of State accept that there is widespread support for community service in place of imprisonment? Does he agree that many people feel that the really big criminals operating in the City are not being pursued vigorously enough by the Government because of their insistence on the enterprise culture and their exaltation of greed and personal profit? The Government ought to set an example by pursuing the big criminals in the City with much more vigour than they appear to be doing.

Mr. Waddington: Recent events do not bear out for a moment what the hon. Gentleman says. People have seen how serious offenders are dealt with when those concerned with financial matters are dishonest in their dealings.

Mr. Michael: Does the Secretary of State accept that the police in general feel that, because they are provided with inadequate resources, they are being neglected and that, therefore, they are unable to do their job properly? Community penalties are all very well, but the major problem is that inadequate resources have been provided over the years to implement them. The resources chapter in the White Paper deals with the provision of resources for specific penalties, but it says nothing about prevention. If the Government tackled properly the prevention of crime, many people would not get into the criminal system in the first place.

Mr. Waddington: I do not know what sort of world the hon. Gentleman lives in. During the past 10 years, Neighbourhood Watch has grown to 81,000 schemes. Moreover, throughout the country there are safer cities projects and Crime Concern, funded by the Government, has blossomed. No Government have paid greater attention to crime prevention than this one. The hon. Gentleman must be living in a very odd world if he does not know that there are 15,500 more police officers now than there were in 1979. In addition, 10,000 civilians who were not employed in 1979 are now employed by the police thereby freeing police officers, who previously did desk jobs, to get out on the streets.

For the most serious offences, there is no doubt that a prison sentence will normally be necessary, and often a long one. Under the guidance of the Court of Appeal, sentences for offences such as rape and robbery have been getting longer in recent years and rightly so. The Bill confirms the appropriateness of heavy sentences for sadistic and brutal crimes, making it clear that long sentences can be given where the public may be at risk of serious harm from a sexual or violent offender. On the other hand, penalties that keep the offender in the community may often be better for offences of a less serious nature, particularly where violence is not involved.

Mr. Robin Squire (Hornchurch): There will be widespread support for my right hon. and learned Friend's statement that sentences for crimes of violence, including sexual crimes, are to be increased. Will he undertake to look closely at clause 25 which, it has been suggested,

[Mr. Robin Squire]

would increase the punishment for minor offences such as soliciting by men or women? If that is so, I am sure that many hon. Members would suggest that much higher sentences for those offences are not appropriate.

Mr. Waddington: I do not believe that my hon. Friend can be right. Clause 25 does not refer to that. If he will have a word with me afterwards, I shall see whether there is anything that I can do to meet his point.

Despite all the good work that is done in prisons, the experience of prison is inevitably to make the offender used to living in an institution and to cut him off from his ties with the community. Instead of being made to face up to his responsibilities in the community, the offender is relieved of them. Less experienced offenders rub shoulders with the more experienced and, as often as not, they come out far worse than they were when they went in. A community sentence which makes the offender face up to his crimes and their effect on the victim can often make greater demands on the offender than allowing him just to loaf around in prison at the taxpayer's expense.

I shall not go through the whole Bill—but I will deal briefly with some of the main features.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): Will the Secretary of State admit that over the past decade, as the large mental institutions have been emptied, many people with mental illnesses have ended up not homeless in cardboard boxes but in the prison system? Has not he missed a golden opportunity to do something for that vulnerable group of people who are not catered for in the Bill? Secure units for people with mental illness are in short supply and this is just a missed opportunity.

Mr. Waddington: We have not missed a golden opportunity because this is the problem to which we have been addressing ourselves. The hon. Lady may know that in the past month we issued a circular that reinforced the opportunities that the courts have for diverting people of that kind from prison.

Clause 1 establishes that a custodial sentence is to be passed——

Mr. Roy Hattersley (Birmingham, Sparkbrook): The Home Secretary talked about diverting people. Who diverts them and where are they diverted to?

Mr. Waddington: I was telling the hon. Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) that within the past month we have issued a circular reminding the courts of all the opportunities that exist for sentences that divert people suffering from mental illness to places other than within the criminal justice system.

Mr. Hattersley: Since the Home Secretary cannot bring himself to give us an answer, let me tell him. They are diverted to sitting about in the streets with nobody to look after them.

Mr. Waddington: The right hon. Gentleman does not know what he is talking about and he had better read the circular.

Clause 1 establishes that a custodial sentence is to be passed only if the court is of the opinion that the offence is so serious that only a custodial sentence can be justified for it. This criterion is based on that which applies to young offenders under section 123 of the Criminal Justice Act 1988, but a little more flexibility is provided to cater for the case where the court is sentencing for more than one offence, and a second offence might tip the balance between custody being or not being justified.

Clause 2 requires the court to apply similar principles to determining the length of a custodial sentence, and clause 3 sets out the information to which the court is to have regard in forming its judgment whether a custodial sentence is justified and, if so, for how long. In all cases, a pre-sentence report is required. This will replace the existing social inquiry report, but in a form more closely adapted to the court's sentencing requirements.

Clause 3 makes it clear that the previous record of the offender, or his response to previous sentences, is not to be taken into account unless the previous offending behaviour is genuinely relevant to the new offence in the sense of making it more serious.

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that there is nothing in the Bill that will affect or change a suspect's right to silence? Does he accept that the only people who benefit from the right to silence are those who have something to hide? Does he think that we should include in the Bill a provision whereby courts are allowed to take into account the fact that someone has refused to disclose what he or she was doing at a particular time?

Mr. Waddington: My hon. Friend is right in believing that there is nothing in the Bill relating to the so-called right to silence. My hon. Friend might have an opportunity of discussing that when the Bill is upstairs in Committee. It is a pretty important subject which is in the remit of the committee now being presided over by Lord Justice May.

I was dealing with the relevance of previous convictions which might suggest, for example, that the offence before the court was the premeditated act of a professional burglar and not done on the spur of the moment. Clearly, in that case, the previous conviction would be relevant.

Mr. David Clelland (Tyne Bridge): Is the Secretary of State aware of the worrying growth among young people of car theft and dangerous speeding around residential estates, which led to the death of a 10-month-old baby in my constituency last week? Does he believe that the law on such crimes should be tightened?

Mr. Waddington: I am entitled to ask the hon. Gentlemen to consider the figures on the number of young people who have been sent to custodial establishments following the passing of the Criminal Justice Acts of 1982 and 1988. Interestingly, although those Acts put in place a similar regime to the one that we are proposing to extend across the age range, the number of offenders in that age group seems to have gone down rather than up. I am not attracted by the idea that we should cast aside these imaginative proposals, which have been tested as a result of the 1982 and 1988 Acts.

Mr. Clelland *rose*——

Mr. Waddington: I cannot give way again; I must get on.

Clause 5 provides that community penalties should be imposed only in accordance with the gravity of the offence. It lists the various orders that are available, including the new combined probation and community service order.

The maximum length of a community service order on a 16-year-old is brought in line with that for 17-year-olds —240 hours.

Mr. James Hill (Southampton, Test): Community responsibility for offenders has been practised in many areas, including in my constituency. It is almost impossible to oversee those activities. More people are needed on the ground to ensure that young offenders are doing what they say they are doing. There has been an absolutely negative response in my area. I do not know whether my right hon. and learned Friend will allocate more funds to the overseers, but it is a problem.

Mr. Waddington: This is an important point. We shall allocate resources, because we want effective community service programmes that make real demands of offenders. That is why there will be national standards on which much work has been done by my right hon. Friend the Minister of State.

The new curfew order is included in the list of community penalties. It could play a useful part in keeping offenders out of trouble, preventing them from mixing with their old criminal associates on a Saturday night, for instance, and drifting back into crime.

The House will recall the recent pilot schemes by which courts in three areas were able to use electronic monitoring to enforce curfews that were imposed as a condition of bail. Relatively few orders were made, because it was a condition of their use that the case was so serious that otherwise the magistrates would have remanded in custody. The orders that were made demonstrated the technical feasibility of electronic monitoring and I am bound to say that it completely baffles me why the press keeps insisting that the defying of the conditions of bail in some of those cases proves that monitoring does not work. If the authorities knew, as they did, that the conditions had not been observed, the monitoring was highly successful.

Mrs. Maureen Hicks (Wolverhampton, North-East): Does not evidence from America demonstrate the success of electronic monitoring? Those who are being negative and are suggesting that we should not proceed with a scheme, which is in its early days, whereby we can keep people who have done wrong in the community and monitor their activities are foolish. I endorse electronic tagging and hope that the pilot schemes will continue.

Mr. Waddington: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's support. The opposition to the schemes is nonsensical. Those who oppose electronic nagging—*[Laughter.]* I mean tagging—are the same people who are nagging me to try to keep people out of custody. Can one imagine anything more frivolous and ridiculous than the Opposition giggling and hallooing about electronic nagging—[HON. MEMBERS: "Nagging?"] It really is nagging. If the Opposition had their way, we would finish up with great pleas from them for more people to be punished in the community with not a single punishment available in the community. That is the sort of nonsense we invariably hear from the nagging gentlemen opposite.

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): I listened carefully to my right hon. and learned Friend and I congratulate him on what he said. The long title of the Bill would allow him to deal with some of the problems of hooliganism, particularly the problem of drinking alcohol publicly in the streets. Is my right hon. and learned Friend satisfied that the recommendations in the paper that has been issued by the Home Office to local authorities will be carried out? If local authorities do not, we should take positive action in the House to ensure that this is done nationally. Will my right hon. and learned Friend comment on this matter?

Mr. Waddington: We approved a model byelaw and it is now up to local authorities to decide whether they want to use it. Under this procedure, it is not for us to say that they must use it. I hope that my hon. Friend will do his best to persuade his local authority that it is well worth its while to look into this aspect, but I cannot take the matter further than that.

Financial penalties are covered in clauses 15 to 21. The vast majority of criminal offences are dealt with now by fines—80 per cent. of offenders were punished in this way in 1989—and the proposals in the Bill would encourage the use of financial penalties in appropriate cases and set out to make their use more effective.

Clause 16 introduces a unit fines scheme which will enable magistrates to take account of the ability of offenders to pay and to fine in a way that makes equal demands on offenders of different means. Magistrates courts will be required to assess fines in terms of units, with the number of units corresponding to the seriousness of the offence and the value of each unit reflecting the weekly disposable income of the offender. One benefit of the new system should be a reduction in the number of people sent to prison for fine default and that should certainly be the effect of the new power in clause 21 for fines to be recovered by attachment of income support.

This part of the Bill includes the important proposal in clause 23 to reduce certain maximum penalties—the penalties for theft, which will come down from 10 years to seven years, and for non-domestic burglary, which will come down from 14 years to 10 years. The maximum penalty for domestic burglary remains at 14 years. Few people now go to prison for anything like seven years for theft and virtually no one goes to prison for as many as 10 years for burglary, but a reduction in maximum penalties is a useful way in which Parliament can express its view on the relative seriousness of, for instance, crimes of dishonesty and crimes of violence.

Mr. Terry Dicks (Hayes and Harlington): I see no mention of a proposal to do away with concurrent sentencing. Is it not about time that people who committed more than one crime served a sentence for more than one crime? Should not we do away with the nonsense and injustice of concurrent sentencing?

Mr. Waddington: I do not think that we could do away with concurrent sentences. There could be absurd situations in which a person was before a court for 25 crimes, all serious, and the judge took the view that each crime warranted a sentence of 10 years' imprisonment. The judge would finish up sending the chap down for 250 years. Everyone would say that that was a bizarre and unusual punishment which was highly unlikely to be enforced.

Part II of the Bill introduces a radical reform of the arrangements for granting parole and remission. The present arrangements are not satisfactory. The interaction of the minimum qualifying period for parole and remission can lead to prisoners who have been given different terms of imprisonment serving the same time. At present,

[Mr. Waddington]

prisoners sentenced to 12, 15 and 18 months' imprisonment could all be released after six months. The first would be released with automatic half remission, the second would qualify for parole after six months and the third would become eligible for parole at the one third point in his sentence. Release at the one third point of sentence, which can occur if a person gets maximum parole and maximum remission, lead to an unacceptable erosion of the value of the sentence passed by the court. That is bad for respect for the criminal justice system.

The arrangements proposed in part II are intended to make the sentence served relate more closely to the sentence passed. No prisoner will be released earlier than the halfway point of his sentence, except on exceptional compassionate grounds. Prisoners serving fewer than four years will be released automatically at that point unless release is delayed by added days awarded for misbehaviour while in prison. Once released, those serving sentences of a year or more, and all young offenders, will be supervised by the probation service up to the three quarter point of their sentence as a means of protecting the public and to assist their reintegration into society. All such offenders will be liable to be returned to prison to serve the remainder of their sentences if they reoffend before the expiry of the original term.

The Government agree with the view taken by the Carlisle committee that a discretionary early release scheme for prisoners serving relatively short terms can no longer be justified. For those serving four years or more, the primary consideration in deciding whether parole should be granted should be risk to the public. The Parole Board will, of course, continue in existence to consider the cases of prisoners who are eligible for parole under the new arrangements. However, as there will be many fewer cases to be considered for parole than now, the present local review committees, which carry out the initial consideration of cases, will no longer be required. The Bill also makes it possible for the Home Secretary to delegate to the Parole Board the final decision in such classes of case as he specifies. It is my intention initially to delegate this responsibility to the board in cases where the prisoner is serving a term of fewer than seven years.

The Carlisle committee noted in its report that the meaning that will be restored to the sentence actually passed may well result in somewhat shorter sentences. I think that there is reason to believe that the changes proposed, when taken as a whole, will not result in an increase in the prison population and may lead to a reduction.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): When will the commencement clauses come into operation? There is a problem that, although in future people will be sentenced under the legislation, existing prisoners will also be considered for parole under the Bill. Those in prison at present are uncertain whether the old or new parole conditions will apply to them.

Mr. Waddington: There is no need for that concern. The Bill proposes that the release date of those already in prison should stand. Their position will not be prejudiced by the fact that they are in prison at the time of the introduction of the new system.

I now come to the very important proposals in clauses 42 to 45 with regard to the Pigot report and children's evidence. At present, children can suffer greatly as a result of having to give evidence in criminal trials. Furthermore, there are a number of obstacles in the way of their evidence being properly considered.

First, the present technical rules about the competence of witnesses result in many young children who have been abused, or have witnessed abuse, simply not being allowed to tell their story to a jury. The Pigot committee's view —and we agree with it—is that the old rules should be swept away and the age and maturity of the child should affect the weight placed upon the evidence, not whether he or she can be heard in the first place. Courts in many other countries work without a competency requirement and I am sure that we can do so as well.

I have no wish to tamper with the rules against hearsay that prevent people who have interviewed a child being able to repeat to the court what the child has told them. What is at issue is whether video recordings of interviews with the child should be allowed in evidence. We believe that they should and that they should be shown to the jury as the child's evidence-in-chief, subject to the judge being able to rule against the admission of any evidence if it does injustice to the accused.

Obviously we must ensure that the child's evidence can be properly tested and that the defendant's right to a fair trial is properly safeguarded. So the Bill provides that cross-examination can take place in its proper place at the trial by the advocate for the defendant, but the power in the Criminal Justice Act 1988 to enable the child to answer questions through a video link from outside the court room will be preserved.

Sir Eldon Griffiths (Bury St. Edmunds): I thank my right hon. and learned Friend for including those provisions. Will he join me in congratulating the many policewomen throughout the country who have been advocating the change that he has outlined for some time? They made their case to the Pigot committee and it accepted it. They have done a public service in enabling the Government to introduce a proposed amendment to the law.

Mr. Waddington: My hon. Friend is entirely right. Congratulations are due to the police. Many teams of police officers carried out experimental schemes which worked so satisfactorily that they impressed Judge Pigot and his committee and reinforced his conclusions that there had to be a change in the law.

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that in America, where the first interview with a child is recorded, 85 per cent. of defendants change their plea to one of guilty? Sometimes defendants would be ashamed to have the video played in open court and in other cases defendants are ashamed and full of remorse for what they have done to the child. This procedure would spare children from having to give evidence and, therefore, must be something which the House should support.

Mr. Waddington: To the best of my knowledge, what my hon. Friend says about the American experience is entirely true. I take the view that the introduction of these new procedures will result in many more pleas of guilty and that is eminently satisfactory.

The remaining clauses of part III deal with parental responsibility. I have said before, and I say again, that it is nonsense to suggest that every time a young person comes before a court the parents are to blame. Sensible parents should thank their lucky stars that their own children have not fallen foul of the law. But parents have a key role to play in instilling in their children a sense of right and wrong and the Bill underlines that role. It places a duty on the courts to require the attendance of a parent or guardian unless it would be unreasonble to do so. Parents of children under 16 years of age are already normally responsible for the payment of any fine or compensation order that is imposed and to strengthen the impact of this the Bill makes clear that the courts, in deciding on the level of payment to be made, must take account of the parents' means and not only the means of the child. The courts' powers to bind over parents of offenders to take proper care of and exercise proper control over their children are also extended.

This part of the Bill also changes the way in which young people themselves are treated in the criminal justice system.

Mr. Peter Archer (Warley, West): Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman agree that if someone is to be bound over it is important that everyone should know what he has to do in order not to forfeit his recognisance? What is envisaged in keeping proper control of the child? Does that mean that if the child reoffends the recognisance is almost automatically forfeited? If not, what are the rules?

Mr. Waddington: I envisage a situation where the child and the parents appear before the court, the court is not impressed with the story told by the parents about the sort of supervision that they have been exercising over the child, the court comes to the conclusion that the child has been offending, going out late at night and the parents have not even known that that has been happening, the parents are bound over, return with the child and it then appears that the parents have not paid the slightest attention to the child's movements and have done nothing to try to find out where the child has been going at night. I do not suggest for a moment that there could be an absolute liability under which whatever the child did wrong was brought to the parents' door. That could not possibly be right.

Part III also changes the way in which young people are treated in the criminal justice system. It proposes that 17-year-olds should henceforth be treated as young persons rather than adults. Clause 53 renames the juvenile court the youth court.

The White Paper invited views about whether the sentence of detention in a young offender institution might be abolished for female offenders under the age of 18. Having considered the views expressed, we have concluded that a different approach would be better and therefore clause 49 proposes that the provisions for boys and girls should be brought into line. That will mean that neither boys nor girls aged 14 will be sentenced to detention in a young offender institution. Sometimes, however, children are involved in very serious offences and we have, I believe, got to keep the power in section 53 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1933.

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): One of the least attractive and least satisfactory aspects of prisons is the holding on remand of young boys aged 16 and 17. Will my right hon. and learned Friend, through the arrangements in the Bill, take urgent steps to ensure that 16 and 17-year-old boys are not held in adult prisons, particularly when on remand?

Mr. Waddington: My hon. Friend will know that there is a very important passage about that in the White Paper. I assure him that an announcement will be made about our proposals during proceedings on the Bill.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): Will my right hon. and learned Friend consider youngsters aged 14 or 15 who play truant and, because of the time taken by the juvenile courts to deal with them, have actually left school before their cases are heard? Is not it time that we considered the whole process and that time was taken to deal with juvenile offenders who play truant, to ensure that they come to court as quickly as possible because they are the very people who are out on the streets committing burglaries during the course of the school day?

Mr. Waddington: It is important that those young offenders should be brought to court quickly. Indeed, I believe that all offenders should be brought to court quickly. During proceedings on the Bill, we might discuss whether the present provisions in law about truancy are strong enough or whether the law should be reinforced perhaps once again by binding over provisions to bind over parents to ensure that their children do not play truant.

Mr. Hattersley: I hope that the Home Secretary will tell us a little more about his proposal for young offenders remanded in prison. He was right to say that his White Paper made specific proposals in that area and he was right to imply that his Bill does not reflect those proposals. With respect, it will not do for the Home Secretary to tell the House on Second Reading that some change will be made to the Bill sooner or later. He should give us some idea at least of the shape and size of that change.

Mr. Waddington: The object is to devise a system that will not result in their going to prison and that must be worked out closely. We must bear in mind that some of those who are remanded in custody at the moment are remanded by the magistrates because the magistrates believe that it is necessary to remand them to protect the public. We must devise a system whereby secure accommodation will be available as a substitute for sending those people to prison. That is the difficulty, but there is no doubt about the aim. The right hon. Gentleman and I obviously agree about the aim, but we will make an announcement as soon as possible.

Part IV provides for the more efficient administration of the criminal justice services. Clauses 57 to 60 provide for the appointment of court security officers in magistrates courts with a framework of powers and safeguards that will resolve any uncertainty about the powers of court staff to deal with, or anticipate, disorder.

Clauses 61 to 71 give effect to the Government's proposals for involving the private sector in the operation of the remand system. Power is being taken to contract out court escort work and to put out to tender the running of new remand centres. If the proposals are accepted by Parliament, competitive tenders will be invited for the operation of the new remand centre currently being built at Everthorpe in Humberside.

[Mr. Waddington]

If there is private sector involvement, the operation of the private sector body will be closely supervised; in the case of escort duties by a Government official called the monitor and by a panel of lay observers.

As to remand centres, any one that was contracted out would have permanently assigned to it a Government-appointed controller, who, rather than the private sector director of the establishment, would conduct disciplinary hearings, authorise a prisoner's removal from association, his confinement in a special cell, or the application to him of any other special control or restraint.

Finally, I should like to emphasise the importance of clauses 76 and 77. They fill a gap in the ability of probation committees to make grants to voluntary and other organisations that provide facilities for the supervision or assistance of offenders or defendants on bail. The discussion paper "Partnership in dealing with offenders in the community", which we issued in April this year, outlines a number of options for involving the voluntary and private sectors more extensively in support of the probation service's work.

I hope that this description of the Bill's main contents has confirmed what I said at the beginning—that the Bill consists of a coherent and well thought-out set of inter-related measures, all designed in one way or another to make the criminal justice system more effective and efficient in the way in which it delivers justice and deals with offenders, and that it will be able to respond yet more effectively to the challenges with which it is confronted. As such, it deserves, I believe, to be supported by all sections of the House and I commend it accordingly.

4.21 pm

Mr. Roy Hattersley (Birmingham, Sparkbrook): I beg to move, to leave out from "That" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

this House declines to give a Second Reading to a Bill which, while making provision for appropriate custodial punishment for violent offenders, does not include any measures to encourage crime prevention; fails to take the steps necessary for a significant reduction in the imprisonment of minor offenders; largely ignores the scandal of remand prisoners; contains no code of standards which all prisons must observe; does not introduce a sentencing council to ensure uniformity of sentence; makes no provision for adequate examination of alleged miscarriages of justice; and will have little impact either on the efficiency of the courts or this country's unacceptably high prison population.

According to the White Paper that preceded the Bill and on which the Bill is said to be based, one of the objects of the legislation is that

"a significant reduction in the number of offenders in custody"

should come about, yet, when the Bill was published, the Home Secretary was explicit. He said:

"I would not like anyone to presume this Bill is a measure designed to empty prisons."

He made the same point during the debate on the Queen's Speech, when he said:

"it certainly would not be right to present our proposals as being designed to get rid of prison overcrowding."—[*Official Report*, 12 November 1989; Vol. 180, c. 353.]

Today, he made one of the blindingly obvious statements that we have come to expect from him—that it was not his intention to allow prisoners out of prison if they were a threat and danger to the community. Nobody expects that and nobody would support that.

The real question is whether the Home Secretary expects that, by removing custodial sentences from prisoners who are not a threat and danger to the community, he imagines that the Bill will result in a substantial and highly necessary reduction in the prison population. If, as the afternoon wears on, he comes to any firm conclusion about his intentions, perhaps he will let the House know.

Mr. Waddington: I shall let the right hon. Gentleman know what the calculations are, but I still think that the point that I made is important. We really must not approach this matter as just an exercise in getting rid of prison overcrowding and getting people out of prison regardless of the protection of the public. Leaving out the parole changes, the new sentencing framework should lead to a reduction of 1,500. The parole changes should lead to a further reduction of 500, excluding any changes in sentence lengths or the return of persons to prison. A 10 per cent. return rate would lead to a net increase of about 300. A 20 per cent. return rate would lead to a net increase of about 1,100. A 5 per cent. reduction in the length of sentences of up to four years would lead to a reduction of 900, offsetting the increasee in numbers resulting from return during the recall period. The right hon. Gentleman will see how complicated it is.

Mr. Hattersley: I hope that it is as complicated as it sounds, because my fear is that it is not complicated at all but is simply a wild guess made in the anticipation that I would ask the Home Secretary to answer the question that I asked last Monday. I hope that the Home Secretary—knowing what a courteous man he is, I am sure that he will do this—will let us know the calculations on which those figures are based so that we can all examine them with the care that they deserve.

In the meantime, I have two comments. First, as I shall try to explain as my speech proceeds, I have some reservations about whether the changes in the parole system will have the result that the right hon. and learned Gentleman has described. I hope that they will, but they may not. Secondly, I hope that the right hon. and learned Gentleman understands that, by his own standards and according to his own criteria, reducing the prison population by removing from custodial sentencing men and women who are perfectly safe to be in the community is, in itself, a major blow against crime. It was the Home Secretary—not me—who wrote:

"Prisons have become the universities of crime."

I hope that we can be consistent in our constant reiteration that in many ways crime is increased by sending to prison men and women who should not be there in the first place.

I make my position and that of my party absolutely clear. Of course, we share the Government's view that some crimes, especially violent and sexual crimes, should result in prison sentences. We also support the principle that many crimes should not carry a custodial sentence. If the object of the Bill is to keep out of prison those offenders who should not be sent there, it is absurd to say that reducing the prison population is not one of its principal intentions. The pretence that reducing the prison population is an irrelevant by-product could be forgotten if it were no more than a result of the Home Secretary's usual tenuous grasp of the subject or an indication of the need to guard his back. But if it is more than that, the inconsistency is worth a mention. I believe that the

inconsistency has a deeper significance and that it is reflected in the ambivalence of parts of the Bill. That inconsistency results in confusions and contradictions. Worse still, it results in an absolute failure to introduce the procedures that would ensure the successful application even of the principle that the Government claim to support, which is that sentences should invariably be suited to the offence. The Government's continued obsession with punishment lies at the heart of their failure adequately to encourage crime prevention.

I take my first example of the confusion from clause 1, which is the keystone of the Bill and a proposition with which the Opposition are in wholehearted agreement. Clause 1 requires that a custodial sentence should be imposed only when the crime is too "serious" to justify anything else. Unfortunately, no attempt is made to define the word "serious". As the afternoon goes on, perhaps the Home Secretary will tell the House the way in which he believes that the word "serious" should be interpreted by the courts. What is more, clause 1 does not apply to persons who have already been to gaol and who are charged with indictable offences. One quarter of the men and women who are charged on indictment currently receive a non-custodial sentence, although many of them —the Home Office does not know how many, but has confirmed that there are many—have previously been in prison. Applying the consistency that we should like to see, we must therefore ask the Home Secretary what he expects to happen to such people in the future. One interpretation of the clause might result in custodial sentences being applied to offenders who are not now sent to prison and who are not, by any reasonable standard, appropriate for that sentence.

It is not for me to say whether the Home Secretary supports the right idea and has lost his nerve or whether he has watered down a better Bill that was bequeathed to him by his predecessor. However, whatever the reason, the ambivalence produces confusion that can only result in the supposed intention—appropriate sentences for appropriate crimes—being frustrated. I justify that assertion by referring to clause 3 which deals with the awarding of a custodial sentence. Subsection (2) states:

"an offence shall not be regarded as more serious by reason of any previous convictions".

Those words implement the White Paper promise to ensure that sentences are awarded on the basis of specific convictions rather than records.

However, subsection (3) instructs the courts to take into account the circumstances of any offences for which the offender has been previously convicted. Those two adjacent subsections send messages to the courts that, through interpretation or misinterpretation, might be in conflict. The conflict, the misinterpretation and the confusion can be overcome in only one way—by the creation of a sentencing council, a subject to which I shall return in a moment. We deeply regret that that is not one of the Bill's proposals.

Even without the confusion that I have attempted to describe, there will be problems with persuading the courts to impose custodial sentences in the way and to the extent that is right and necessary. Those problems can be resolved only, as I have already said and now repeat, by the creation of a sentencing council to give courts advice —and I emphasise the word "advice"—on the range, extent and type of sentence that they should award. As far as I can determine, that idea is supported by everyone involved in the area, with the exception of the Government and the more archaic sections of the judiciary.

A sentencing council is essential because of discrepancies in sentencing. Even if the Home Secretary had not set himself the aim of sentences fitting convictions, such a council would be necessary. I shall outline some of the current discrepancies. The latest figures show that at Wood Green Crown court, 30 per cent. of convicted defendants are sent to prison, whereas at Mold, on a very similar crime pattern, the figure is 69 per cent. In Powys, 6 per cent. of convictions for theft carry a custodial sentence, but in Cheshire the figure is 17 per cent. In Gloucester, 29 per cent. of burglars go to prison, but in north Wales the figure is 54 per cent.

A sentencing council would help to smooth out such unacceptable discrepancies. It would also contribute to the eradication of the intolerable bias against black and Asian British, a bias which disgraces our criminal justice system. Some 16 per cent. of the prison population is black or Asian, compared with 5 per cent. for the population as a whole. That is not because they are less law abiding than their white colleagues and contemporaries, but because they are more likely, on equal terms, to be awarded a custodial sentence and to be refused bail. Having been remanded in gaol, they are more than twice as likely to be acquitted, proving that it is a question not of their criminality, but of the bias against them when bail is awarded.

A sentencing council is necessary to right all those wrongs. It is also essential if we are to strike the right balance between prison and non-custodial sentences.

Mr. Steve Norris (Epping Forest): The right hon. Gentleman is right to say that any bias in the judicial system against a particular section of the community is to be deplored, and every effort should be taken within the judicial system to ensure that that bias is obviated. We catch the general drift of his remarks, which is to avoid aberrant sentences in various parts of the country, but could he explain what is a real worry for some of us? How would his proposals materially improve the current position? The Court of Appeal issues sentencing guidelines, the Magistrates Association sets tariffs, and the present framework that offers advice and direction to courts disposing of offenders avoids what surely must be the great danger of a national sentencing council—that of, in effect, sentencing people by microcomputer. That would be very unsatisfactory, given the individual nature of each offence.

Mr. Hattersley: We do not advocate sentencing people by microcomputer. However, I am strongly in favour of an Asian British citizen and a white British citizen, who are being sentenced for the same crime, in the same circumstances, with the same background and with the same ameliorating factors, receiving identical sentences. The outcome will never be perfectly achieved, but there is a number of ways in which to approach the matter. The first is the declaratory statement in the Bill. I hope that the Home Secretary is as sympathetic towards that as he sounded when I caught his drift. I shall press him on that in Committee.

The sentencing council should have a force and influence that the guidelines do not have. Were the guidelines to possess such force, the figures I read out a

[Mr. Hattersley]

moment ago could not apply. The sentencing council would take stronger views than the guidelines on such matters and expose some of the enormities. It would embarrass those people who do not live up to the high standards that I genuinely believe the Home Secretary wants to see applied in court. The sentencing council would be a tougher instrument than the guidelines. It is not simply I and my party who believe that—nearly everyone in the system, apart from some judges and the Government, believe that such a council is right. In support of that contention I quote, as I quoted last week, but more briefly, what *The Times* had to say on the subject:

"The transmission mechanism between Parliament, Home Office and judiciary is creaking and ineffective"—

I believe that the hon. Member for Epping Forest (Mr. Norris) read out one of those creaky and ineffective circulars.

"Judges are notoriously their own creatures, disinclined through long exercise of power to heed outside influence".

In common with *The Times*, I believe that only a sentencing council can make judges more responsive.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): I appreciate the right hon. Gentleman's desire to improve the sentencing process, which he has constantly elucidated to the House. If we had a sentencing council it would take over from the judgment of an individual judge in first instance and then from the Court of Appeal. The individual tribunal looks at the person before the court and judges consider the circumstances of that person, the offence and other related circumstances before passing sentence. The media and the House would look to the sentencing council to judge that that sentence does not fit. Surely the right hon. Gentleman accepts that that is not justice, but an interference in the process of law.

Mr. Hattersley: The sentencing council that I propose would not make adjudications on individual cases, as that would elevate its status into something quite different from what I intend. The sentencing council would look at court records and the records of individual judges.

Some weeks ago a recently retired judge appeared on television and announced that he always assumed one category of prisoner to be guilty because of that category of prisoner's private life and private conduct. I shall not describe that category or the language in which the judge described it. Somebody should study his pattern of sentencing, but, to date, that has not happened. Somebody should ensure that one individual does not, for one reason or another, abuse the extraordinary power which he, as a judge, possesses. I shall not speculate on the reasons behind that judge's decision.

Another important reason for setting up a sentencing council is that it is essential to improve the prospects—I put it no higher than that—of changing the sentencing climate and the ethos of sentencing. The tragedy of our criminal justice system is that we assume that the normal outcome of many convictions is a prison sentence.

Community service, which is fine, and probation are described in the jargon as "alternatives"—something different from the norm. Such are the words used, but prison should not be the norm, but the exception. It should be the sentence of last resort and the sentencing council would help to make it so. That point was also made by Her Majesty's chief inspector of prisons, Judge Tumim, in his report published a few weeks ago. He said that we should not judge prison in terms of retribution, gratification for the community or by whether it is nice or nasty to prisoners, but in terms of the criminality it produces and the pattern of society it creates. That is why it is so counter productive for the Home Secretary to use flamboyant language about slaps on wrists and the severity of punishment. That sort of language induces the wrong attitude towards what prison is supposed to be about and what sentencing is supposed to achieve. It is not simply about punishing people or gratification for those who have been wronged, but about building a different sort of society.

I have already spoken about the bias in our criminal justice system against black and Asian British. A week ago I asked the Home Secretary about the work done in his Department to prohibit and eliminate that bias. The Home Secretary said that he had no knowledge of such work, which was surprising, given the accounts about it which appeared in *The Independent* on 11 October and *The Times* on 13 October.

I shall explain what happened, although the right hon. and learned Gentleman may have found out by now. His civil servants discussed the inclusion in the Bill of a clause that prohibited discrimination in the criminal justice system. Such a clause does not appear in the Bill, but I give formal notice that we shall attempt to insert it in Committee. I say with gratitude that I believe that I interpreted some sympathy for the idea in one response that the Home Secretary gave, and I hope that we can build on the shred or degree of sympathy that I believe I detected. The absence of a clause on racial discrimination is not the Bill's only major omission.

Mr. Waddington: I cannot allow the right hon. Gentleman to leave the matter there. During the debate on the Queen's Speech he made a number of allegations which did not have a vestige of truth in them. The right hon. Gentleman asserted that clauses dealing with racial discrimination had been drafted and approved by my officials. The innuendo was that I had intervened to prevent them from getting into the Bill. There never were any such clauses and I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will, for once in his life, apologise for a most disgraceful calumny.

Mr. Hattersley: There was no innuendo to the effect that the Home Secretary had prevented that from happening. There was the assertion, which I repeat, that a number of judges had said that they did not wish it to happen. I shall gladly send to the Home Secretary before the debate is concluded—

Mr. Waddington *rose*——

Mr. Hattersley: I shall not give way until I have answered his question. Before the debate ends, I shall gladly send the right hon. and learned Gentleman a letter sent by one of his civil servants to a participant at the meeting to which I referred. That letter talked about the discussion of inclusions in the Bill and it went on to say that, although those inclusions had been considered, it was decided that they should not appear in the Bill. It is not a matter of dispute. It is there in black and white. I am not speaking of a secret letter that has been leaked or stolen. It was sent to many of the participants in the discussions of potential clauses to be included in the Bill.

Mr. Waddington: The right hon. Gentleman is being slippery. We are not talking about discussions but about an assertion that he made on 12 November, when he said:

"The Home Secretary knows that while the Criminal Justice Bill was being drafted in the Home Office, officials . . . approved clauses to impose a duty on courts to end all racial discrimination in the criminal justice system . . . Those clauses were drafted in the Home Office."

Later, after I had told him that I knew of no such clauses, the right hon. Gentleman did not even then let go, but came back:

"The Home Secretary says that he has not seen them, but that may be a confession of his incompetence. Is he telling me that they do not exist? If he is not, we can pursue the matter on Second Reading".—[*Official Report*, 12 November 1990; Vol. 180, c. 360.]

If that was not an allegation that clauses had been drafted and that I had refused to include them in the Bill, I do not know what the English language means. I ask the right hon. Gentleman to apologise for once in his life.

Mr. Hattersley: I do not apologise, because I have nothing for which to apologise.

Mr. Waddington: It was a complete mis-statement.

Mr. Hattersley: The right hon. and learned Gentleman may claim that it was a complete mis-statement, but when we last discussed these matters he claimed that he had never heard of the proposal. I repeat that I shall send him in the next couple of hours the letter from his civil servant discussing with those interested parties the possibility of the inclusion of such clauses. The idea that I should apologise shows how out of perspective the Home Secretary gets this side of his character.

Mr. Maclennan: There is a much greater issue of principle involved in this question than the semantic dispute in which the Home Secretary appears to be involving himself. My understanding of the facts to which the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) referred is that clauses were drafted——

Mr. Waddington: No. 4

Mr. Maclennan: I have seen the drafts and they were submitted. Although they were not drafted by Home Office officials, they were nevertheless seen by the Home Office, so the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook is right.

Mr. Hattersley "We plumb deep waters, Dr. Watson", someone once said. I can only repeat my assertion that I know that clauses were discussed, and the Home Secretary shall have the letter in question if that in any way consoles him. I repeat that I hope, despite his strange outburst, that the right hon. and learned Gentleman will be as sympathetic as he seemed to be only moments ago to the inclusion of such clauses when we submit them for consideration in Committee.

Mr. Waddington: I am not pressing for an apology, because, although the right hon. Gentleman made a mis-statement of fact, he obviously will not apologise. But I repeat that obviously we shall discuss in Committee proposals put forward for such a clause. Indeed, I had discussions with NACRO in which it suggested that there should be such a clause. My reply at the time was that I did not see great value in a mere declaratory provision, as it was described by the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan). Clearly, the matter can be discussed at leisure in Committee. That does not alter the fact that there has never been such a clause in the Home Office.

Mr. Hattersley: We are making progress. I welcome the attitude of the Home Secretary this afternoon, which is different from that which he struck during the Queen's Speech debate. We shall go on co-operating with him while he is in an emollient mood.

The absence of that clause is not the only major omission from the Bill. The measure does not even attempt to deal with the major miscarriages of justice that have scarred our criminal justice system in the recent past. The Guildford Four and the Maguires have been released and the release of the Birmingham Six is confidently expected. Yet the Government seem not to have noticed the failure of the Court of Appeal to respond to such cases with the speed and sensitivity which were demanded and which should be applied to the re-examination of contentious cases. The argument for new and additional appeal machinery, not solely in the hands of judges, is overwhelming, and we shall move to create such an institution in Committee.

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): The right hon. Gentleman referred to the Guildford Four and the Birmingham Six. Does he agree that, in view of the apprehension in regard to the case of the UDR Four in Northern Ireland, there is need to make sure that an early appeal is made possible in that case as well?

Mr. Hattersley: I confess—I apologise for the fault—that I do not know as well as perhaps I should the details of the case that the hon. Gentleman cites. But if it is, as I suspect, a case which is overlaid by two considerations —first, political pressure in the widest sense of the word, when people think that a conviction is right, and, secondly, the apprehension of public opinion, which is saying to the police and the courts, "You must catch somebody quickly for this terrible offence," thus putting great strain on the judicial procedure—it seems an ideal case to refer to the new appeal machinery that we intend to set up. If the hon. Gentleman is a member of the Committee that considers the measure, I hope that he will support us in that endeavour.

Another omission concerns remand. The Bill could have provided a perfect opportunity to reduce the number of men and women remanded in our prisons. A major reduction in numbers would come about—and could still come about without the Bill—if the Home Secretary implemented throughout Britain the rule that trial must begin within 112 days of committal.

I asked eight days ago, and I ask again today, because my question was not answered earlier, why the 112-day rule is not being applied throughout Britain. I hope that, when the Minister replies, he will explain either why it is not being applied throughout the country or when it will be applied, particularly in London and the south-east, where the remand problem is acute.

In addition to that obvious step, the Bill could and should reduce the number of remand prisoners by tightening the Bail Act 1976, and I offer some suggestions about how that Act should be tightened. Surety should be used only as a last resort, and then should be related to ability to pay; courts should find suitable accommodation for bail defendants with psychiatric problems; and all

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individuals charged with non-imprisonable offences should be allowed bail unless they have a long history of absconding.

In 1977, remand accounted for 8·5 per cent. of the prison population; in the first quarter of this year it accounted for 20 per cent.—twice as much as 13 years ago, and meant that more than 10,000 men and women were in prison although they were innocent in law. They were often kept in prison awaiting trial for many months, but after trial, even of those who were convicted, only 52 per cent. of the men and 36 per cent. of the women were sent to prison, despite having been held in prison for weeks, sometimes months. The remand system in this country is a disgrace; it is a double disgrace because the Bill makes no attempt to tackle the problem head on.

One immediate step that we shall propose in Committee is the creation of a court inspectorate that examines and reports on the system and the way individual courts perform, and encourages in courts more concern for efficiency and less for judicial convenience.

The important matter of young remand prisoners has been mentioned. Some 60 per cent. of prison suicides are committed by remand prisoners, many of them young men. The most recent example was that of Simon Willerton, the young man who hanged himself in Armley. He was charged with a non-imprisonable offence, but was held in prison for 12 weeks. The simple fact is that he should never have been in prison. I take great hope and comfort from what I think the Home Secretary said earlier today. I assume that what he said in answer to my intervention means that he means, intends or at least hopes to implement the White Paper promise about getting young men out of remand prisons. If that is so, he will have our wholehearted support in that endeavour.

We applaud the emphasis that the Bill gives to community penalties, particularly when they can be related in the matter of compensation orders to providing restitution. Central to that emphasis are clause 7, which makes a probation order a sentence in its own right, and clause 10, which combines probation and community service orders. I have some sympathy for those combined penalties, subject to one major reservation that I shall set out later. I should like to see greater encouragement for fines and community service to be combined, as well as the other two combinations. It would be one way of meeting a problem described last week by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark) during the debate on the Queen's Speech as white collar crime. In other countries, white collar crime is often combated by large fines combined with litter collection or other uncongenial and embarrassing tasks. There is much to be said for such experiments to be held in this country.

I have one other reservation about combined orders. Combined probation and community service orders could increase the prison population as a result of more frequent breaches. Without guidance, which a sentencing council could provide, combined orders might have the opposite effect to what the Government now intend. My reservations about probation becoming a sentence instead of the alternative to a sentence involves the best use of the probation service. Its role is not the administration of punishment, a word the Government often use when they should use the word "sentence". Probation officers are not warders and turnkeys, supervising what clause 5 wrongly calls "restrictions on liberty"—meaning restrictions on liberty within the community. If supervising some sort of punishment becomes their task, their more positive work of assisting the courts and offenders who might benefit will be destroyed. That is one of our objections to clauses 11 and 12.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. John Patten): I thought that all sentences of the court were intended as a punishment. Will the right hon. Gentleman say which sentences of the court he thinks are not punishments? That is not merely a semantic point, but is important to his argument, as it will be to mine.

Mr. Hattersley: Of course, all sentences are punishment in part. In the debate about the prosecution of alleged war criminals, I spent the first part of my speech describing what I regarded as the seven principles by which alleged offenders were brought to trial, and the reasons why trial and sentencing were right. One of the classic reasons is punishment, another is retribution. My complaint is that the Government talk as though punishment were the be-all and end-all of the process, not one seventh of the intention, but six sevenths or the entire operation. It is a complicated point, but, if the right hon. Gentleman thinks about it, I think that he will understand.

I am opposed to language such as "restrictions on liberty." If it becomes the task of the probation service to administer such punishment, its more creative activities will be harmed and possibly destroyed. That is one of our objections to clauses 11 and 12, though not our principal reason for opposing.

Electric tagging would be a farce if it were ever implemented in this country. We have read encouraging reports in serious newspapers that, while the Government feel that they must save face by going ahead with the clauses, they have no intention of implementing the proposal. I hope that the Minister of State, as I understand it, the only true begetter of the scheme——

Mr. Patten: And believer.

Mr. Hattersley: —and true believer in the scheme. That is an admission which should be held against him when other offences are considered. I hope that the Minister of State, the true begetter of the scheme, will say when he winds up whether or not what we read and hope to find true is true.

Mr. Patten: I shall tell the right hon. Gentleman now.
Mr. Hattersley: Please do.

Mr. Patten: My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary explained at some length in his speech, to which I know the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) listened carefully, that electronic monitoring is part of the package of proposals that we intend to make available to the courts at the first available opportunity.

Mr. Hattersley: When will the first available opportunity be?

Mr. Patten: At the first available opportunity.

Mr. Hattersley: Now we have it—it is not being abandoned or held back; it will be implemented at the first

available opportunity, but nobody knows when that will be. That is enormously encouraging to those of us who are critical of the scheme.

Let me tell the Home Secretary, who speculated on the subject, why we are sceptical of the scheme. First, we know of the unreliability of the technology. We know of the poor results from the pilot schemes, which include not simply the fact that the vast majority of the 50 individuals tagged absconded, breached the terms of their bail or committed further offences. We know that many of those people alerted the system even though they were obeying the rules set down for them. We know that they alerted the system due to malfunctions of the instruments. That seems to be an extraordinary way to administer a criminal justice system, but there is worse than that.

Our fear is that, if tagging is introduced, it will not be used for men and women who would otherwise have gone to prison, which should be its only justification. It will not be regarded as safe enough for that. Tagging will be used for cases that would not have qualified for non-custodial sentences. It will be used for people who would have been out of prison anyway, and will be an added imposition on them.

Mr. Hind *rose*——

Mr. Norris *rose*——

Mr. Hattersley: I shall give way, but then I must get on. If I am not careful, I shall go on as long as the Home Secretary did.

Mr. Hind *rose*——

Mr. Hattersley: I have given way to the hon. Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) once. I shall now give way to the hon. Gentleman from another constituency.

Mr. Norris: My right hon. Friend the Minister is not the only true believer. He is one of a great many who accept that, as long as the technology needs to be proven, there is little or no point in introducing such a system. I do not regard moving towards a fairly foolproof electronic system as any bar to using the device. What worries me is the assertion of the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) that the device will be used where custody would not otherwise be justified.

At paragraph 4.22 of the White Paper, specific reference is made to "any restriction on liberty" having to be justified. But the clear statement, with which I hope the right hon. Gentleman agrees, is that if restrictions are justified as part of a sentence,

"most people would prefer electronic monitoring to a remand in custody or a term of imprisonment."

The White Paper seems specific about that. I have no doubt about the intentions of Ministers; what justification does the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook have for any different interpretation?

Mr. Hattersley: I shall return to the points I was making on sentencing policy in general, when I thought that the hon. Member for Epping Forest was nodding. I am sorry to return to it again—without a sentencing council the judiciary is notoriously inclined to err on the side of over-severity by my terms and standards. On many occasions when I and other hon. Members would not use it, the system would be used by the judiciary.

I must press on, as I have already spoken for more than half an hour. In doing so I have set out our reservations about four major areas of the Bill. I want to deal with three other important topics—early release, young offenders and privatisation. But, before doing that, I must make it clear that we agree entirely with large parts of the Bill, or at least we agree with them enough to give them a qualified welcome.

We strongly support the proposed changes in the rules of evidence as they affect the testimony of children. We welcome proposals that courts must consider a social inquiry before passing sentence. We strongly support the requirement that courts must give their reasons for awarding a custodial sentence. We believe so much in that principle that we think that it should be applied to defendants charged with indictable offences who have already served a prison sentence.

We support the establishment of unit fines, as set out in clause 16, and we believe that the principle should be applied to Crown courts as well as magistrates courts. However, I must express one reservation about the proposals on fines. I appreciate that wrongdoers, no matter how poor, may have to face a sentence of some sort, but I have grave misgivings about clause 21. If fines are deducted from income support, the poor will become even poorer and, putting aside arguments of compassion, that is undesirable as increased poverty may be a stimulus to another offence.

In Committee we shall propose two amendments that would help to solve the problem that I describe. First, we shall suggest that when a fine is imposed on a wage earner in an income support family the courts must, on the model of custodial sentencing, be required to explain why it has chosen a fine rather than another form of non-custodial sentence. Secondly, we shall press for at least the examination of a system in which fines could be literally worked off—weekends and evenings spent in socially useful employment with payment not to the worker but to the courts. That, too, is a scheme which applies in many other progressive countries and we should examine it in the United Kingdom.

We endorse a proposal for a reduction of the maximum penalties for theft and non-domestic burglary and for the introduction of automatic release in place of discretionary parole for prisoners serving less than four years. Part II of the Bill makes changes in the general parole system, largely based on the Carlisle report. We believe that there is much to be said for those proposals. Unless the new proposals —parole after half a sentence has been served, automatic for shorter sentences and discretionary for others—are accompanied by parallel reductions in the length of sentencing, there may be difficulties. The new proposals may well increase, not reduce, the prison population. That was certainly not Lord Carlisle's intention and I hope that it is not the Government's either.

I do not believe that clause 23—limited reductions in some sentences—will be enough to compensate for this potential increase. That is why I ask the Home Secretary to supply the figures, which we can then examine in detail. I believe that Lord Carlisle's proposals will work only if his scheme for sentencing is applied in full. He said in the House of Lords that his proposals should be accompanied by a determined effort by the judiciary and those in politics to reduce the length of sentences—particularly in the middle band. The Bill does not endorse that determined aim, but we shall attempt to achieve it in Committee—again, not least by proposing the creation of a sentencing council.

[Mr. Hattersley]

We shall also examine the desirability of early supervisory release being set at a third rather than a half of a sentence and we shall resist proposals that early release prisoners should be at risk of return to prison until the date when their full sentences would have been served.

Mr. Waddington: We are amazed by what we have just heard. Did the right hon. Gentleman say, entirely contrary to the suggestion by the Carlisle committee, that the Opposition propose that people should be released after serving one third of their sentence? The whole theme of the Carlisle proposal is that the sentence served should be more closely related to the sentence passed. Is that to be thrown overboard?

Mr. Hattersley: The right hon. and learned Gentleman has picked and chosen from the Carlisle report himself, so he cannot complain if others do the same. There is much to be commended in the report, and that we commend and support, but the right hon. and learned Gentleman was not listening when I quoted Lord Carlisle's words about the reduction in sentences that has to go with this scheme. We shall examine all these matters in Committee.

My next remarks are directed specifically to the Home Secretary. We all agree, for agreement is easy enough, that parents should take responsibility for their children. But that is not a policy: it is a cliché. The real question is whether legislation will encourage that process of responsibility. Many Conservative Members who deny absolutely that the law can change attitudes to race apparently believe that laws can alter attitudes to parental responsibility. For my part, I doubt whether juvenile offenders' parents who do not come to court voluntarily will be made more responsible by compulsory attendance. We certainly support the maximum age for consideration at youth courts, as they are to be called, being increased to 18. We also welcome clause 49 which ends custodial sentences for 14-year-olds, but we would go far further. We would abolish prison department custody for juveniles.

Finally, I turn to the twin proposals—twin because they are related to ideology, although by nothing more—for private remand centres and private escort agencies. I have already called for emergency action to reduce the number of remand prisoners in our gaols. Obviously and by definition, emergency action should be taken immediately, but a fundamental review of remand should have waited for Lord Justice Woolf to answer the Government's questions about—I quote from the terms of reference—the "number and conditions of remand prisoners". Instead of waiting for their own inquiry to report, the Government have leapt in to answer the question with silly dogma.

The private remand centre has no rational justification. Whatever it achieves could be achieved in public centres if the Government willed that objective. Contradictions inherent in this policy can be demonstrated by two questions that I hope the Minister of State will be meticulous in answering. Are these private probation institutions to be subject to minimum standards of accommodation and treatment? Are minimum standards to be laid down for how they house and treat their prisoners? I assume that the answer must be yes, although I see that the Minister is busy finding out. I believe that it would not be possible to allow private contractors to operate in this area without some regulation.

Mr. Patten: The right hon. Gentleman has not read the Bill.

Mr. Hattersley: I have a second question to which it seems the Minister will have to send for an answer as well. If minimum standards are to be laid down for private institutions, are they also to be laid down for Her Majesty's prisons? It seems strange that private contractors have to behave decently while prisons run by the Government can be as squalid——

Mr. Patten: It might be helpful if I answered the right hon. Gentleman now rather than later. It is clear that he has not conducted his reading of the Bill with due care and attention. From clause 65 onwards the right hon. Gentleman will find the answers to all his questions set out in the Bill. I urge him to look at it.

Mr. Hattersley: The Minister will not find the answer to my most important question set out there. I am happy to have the answer to my first question confirmed, because that means that he must now answer my second. I agree that the private institutions will have minimum standards. How does he justify their having minimum standards but not Her Majesty's prisons? *[Interruption.]* I shall ask the right hon. Gentleman another question and if he can tell me that the answer to it is in the Bill I shall be suitably humble and apologise.

Mr. Michael Shersby (Uxbridge): Humble?

Mr. Hattersley: Not humble—suitably humble. That is quite a different thing.

To pursue a point made by the Home Secretary about the control of these prisons, could we hear more about the controller's status and his position under the law? Under what powers will he operate and how are we to define exactly what his role should be? I should like to hear more, too, about the related matter that is combined with the previous proposal, only because of the silly dogma on which it is based.

Mr. Patten: I know that this is not a Committee stage but a Second Reading debate, but if the right hon. Gentleman looks at the eight subsections of clause 68, he will find a precise reference to the powers of a director, controller or monitor.

Mr. Hattersley: I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman will do better than that when he winds up the debate. I hope that he will also do better when he answers the other question that I put to him.

In the second inquiry set up by the Government, Lord Justice Woolf examined the best method of fulfilling escort duties and court manning commitments. The Home Secretary answered the question for him in clause 61. There are to be private escorts to and from prison. I understand well enough the burdens that escort duties impose on prison staff and the problems that they create for prison governors as they try to make the best of their overstretched resources. Private escorts are not, however, the answer. They will be badly trained, if trained at all. The record of private security companies taking the place of police officers demonstrates and proves that point.

I take my example from the ports where the transfer of those duties from police officers to private individuals has resulted in the ports being protected by underpaid and undertrained employees who do a cheap, bad job as compared with the regular police. I have no doubt that that pattern will be repeated with the privatisation of the prison escort system. Prison escorts will be given the status of constable. That is necessary, but it is also intolerable. One of the features of private security systems is that untrained and unprepared men and women are made constables in order to give a vestige of respectability to the privatisation process. I cannot imagine the consequences, with such people supervising prisoners, if there should be a mass break-out between court and prison. With untrained and unqualified private escorts who are unable to deal with prisoners, the potential consequences are horrendous.

The Bill contains much that is objectionable and much that is confused and contradictory. It also contains, in some areas, the seeds of sensible reform. We shall do our best to improve it in Committee. I am sure that the Home Secretary will be the first to understand, however, that it will be a long and arduous process. We must all hope that something better emerges from that process.

5.12 pm

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): Once again the Government show that they are a radical, reforming Government. Once again they show that they are far from running out of steam. So much steam is contained in the Bill that one could talk for hours about it. The House knows that that is no idle threat by me, but I respect the rules of the House, the fact that so many other hon. Members want to speak in the debate and your presence, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I shall limit my observations to a few substantial issues. First, sentencing. The public want to be protected against the worst offenders. They must spend much time in prison. However, the worst offender does not mean just the most violent and dangerous offender. It also means those who are a perpetual menace because they continue to commit burglaries, to steal cars and other objects or to perpetrate serious City frauds involving large sums of money.

By all means judges should be made to state the reasons for custody. By all means probation reports should be required before custodial sentences are passed. However, we must ensure that resources are made available so that reports can be prepared quickly after a defendant has been found guilty. It is no use just saying that the probation service will perform; it already performs an outstanding service to society. A substantial increase in resources will be necessary if the probation service is to carry out all the work that is involved in the sentencing and after-care of offenders.

I am not happy about restricting the right of the courts to consider previous convictions only in very confined circumstances. It would often be impracticable for a sentencer to decide whether the "seriousness of the offence" applies or not in a particular case. It would also be undesirable in principle that a man's general propensity for evil should be ignored simply because it was a different kind of evil when last he offended.

Secondly, young offenders. I welcome the approach that seeks to keep young people as far as possible away from custodial sentences. Since 1983, I believe that the number of juvenile offenders given custodial sentences has halved, without any increase in juvenile crime. I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend will confirm that. It is a substantial achievement of law and order under this Government. I understand of course that prisons can become universities of crime, but I am unhappy that we appear to have given up the concept of the short, sharp shock for youngsters as well as adults which deterred many offenders from committing crimes. Is there any evidence that the short, sharp shock has been a total failure? If so, where is it? I do not believe that judges feel that it has been a failure. The experience of the courts suggests that it served a useful purpose, although perhaps its effects were not quite so extensive as in the days of the short, sharp shock of the glass house. It is a pity that we are letting it slip from our grasp.

Thirdly, custodial release. I am sure that the public want sentences served to bear more resemblance to the sentence that was actually passed by the court. The public would be aghast to know just how soon after a sentence some criminals are now released. I am also sure that the requirement that at least half the sentence should be served is a distinct improvement on the third of the sentence that now is all that has to be served. But instead of abolishing the automatic remission of a third of the sentence, which has the effect of ensuring good behaviour, why do we not consider abolishing the often unjust parole system? It should be replaced by the requirement that the prisoner must work his way out of prison, by earning remission for training, effort, productivity and dedication while in custody. I cannot understand why an arbitrary decision on release is consistently thought to be better than shifting some of the responsibility for early release on to the shoulders of the prisoner.

It is well known that the parole system works unhappily from time to time and causes immense resentment among prisoners. Sometimes they cannot understand, because they are not told, why they cannot have parole. In many cases it relates to their family circumstances for which they are not to blame.

Fourthly, the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) believes that a sentencing council would automatically right the wrongs of bias that he claims are proliferating throughout the judicial system. I do not accept that slur upon the judicial system. I do not accept that it ever happened but, if it did, there is no evidence that there is significant bias against black offenders or anybody else in our courts. If there is a predominance of a certain sort of offending resulting in a certain sort of sentence in a certain court area by, for example, black people, it is obvious that the sentences may have to be more substantial than in an area where that type of offending is less. Even if an element of bias existed, as is suggested by the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook, a sentencing council would have substantial disadvantages. It would delay sentencing and that is immensely undesirable. It would interfere with the need for the courts to respond to offences that are prevalent in a particular area. As my hon. Friend the Member for Epping Forest (Mr. Norris) said, it would be a step towards the sort of automatic sentencing which could be achieved much more easily by a machine or a computer placed on the judge's desk and which most of us would find totally undesirable.

The equality sought by the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook and the abolition of the racial bias that he perceives, wrongly, exists widely in the system is being

[Mr. Ivan Lawrence]

achieved by the statutory framework now being introduced into the system, by the increase in the number of people who will no longer serve prison sentences, by the activities of the Court of Appeal in giving formal guidance that is strongly indicative to judges and upon which they all rely before they sentence in most cases and by the Attorney-General's power to refer over-lenient sentences to the Court of Appeal. In addition, there is the limitation of the maximum penalty that reflects the seriousness of offences.

Mr. Hattersley: I am not intervening to argue with the hon. and learned Gentleman about the powers of a sentencing council because that will come later. I want to press him on the existence or otherwise of racial bias in the passionate belief that unless we recognise and acknowledge its existence we shall never overcome it. If it does not exist, how does the hon. and learned Gentleman account for the disproportionate number of black and Asian offenders who are remanded in custody rather than granted bail when that is related to the fact that, having been remanded in custody, they are then acquitted? It is not that they are more criminal, but that they are remanded in custody in high proportions and are acquitted thereafter.

Mr. Lawrence: The test whether a man can have bail usually depends on whether he has a fixed residential address, whether he is in work and whether it is likely that he will appear for trial. Unfortunately, in our society there are areas of Britain in which black people are not in work, do not have a fixed address and do not have anybody to put forward as surety. Those are the considerations that a judge or magistrate must take into account when considering whether it is appropriate to allow bail. It has nothing to do with racial prejudice but everything to do with the tests laid down to ensure that the person attends for trial.

Mr. Hattersley: The hon. and learned Gentleman said that the judge has to take into account whether a person is likely to abscond. Is he saying that black and Asian Britons are more likely to abscond than their white neighbours?

Mr. Lawrence: The right hon. Gentleman was not listening. When a judge is deciding whether a person should be given bail, one of the questions asked is whether he has a fixed address. Unfortunately—I hope that the time will come when things change—many of the blacks in our society——

Mr. Hattersley: And whites.

Mr. Lawrence: Yes, and whites. Many of the blacks in our society do not have fixed addresses, do not have jobs or sureties. The preponderance of that in some areas accounts for the high proportion of black people who are remanded in custody. It has nothing to do with the colour of their skin but everything to do with their ability to persuade a court that they will turn up for their trial. If he asked, the right hon. Gentleman would discover that the incidence of those who abscond is also very high in sections of the community where the magistrates say, "All right, we do not want to appear to be racist and we do not want to use the lack of address, lack of work or lack of a surety to refuse bail. We shall grant bail on their own recognisance." Then, they are never seen again.

Ms. Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): I apologise for not having been in the Chamber to hear the beginning of the hon. and learned Gentleman's speech, but I have heard the point that he is trying to make. My right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) mentioned the obvious distortion in the number of black people remanded in custody when related to the number of people who are acquitted. The hon. and learned Gentleman inferred that the black community was more likely to abscond or not to have a fixed address. I regret that more black people are not in the Strangers' Gallery to hear that extraordinary assertion. Can the hon. and learned Gentleman tell me the statistical basis for saying that black defendants are more likely to abscond or not to have a fixed address or a job? Is there any statistical basis, or is the hon. and learned Gentleman airing his prejudices?

Mr. Lawrence: I have no prejudices in the matter and the hon. Lady should do me the credit of knowing that if there is anybody in this place who has no racial prejudice, it is me. I do not put myself above others but I put myself no lower than the hon. Lady. If the hon. Lady would apply her mind, she would see that I was defending the judicial system from the false accusation made by the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook that the reason why coloured people are remanded in custody more frequently has something to do with the colour of their skin. Whether people are remanded in custody depends on whether they have a fixed address, work or sureties.

Mr. Archer *rose*——

Mr. Lawrence: I shall not give way again because I am trying to make a relatively short speech and I do not want to be dragged down a blind alley that has nothing to do with the important matter that we are considering—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms. Abbott) is totally wrong and if she will keep quiet and listen to the rest of my speech, she will prevent herself from getting apoplexy.

Fifthly, children's evidence. I understand the wish to spare children the ordeal of giving evidence and the good sense of letting all children who can talk give admissible evidence. I understand, for obvious reasons, that the defendant should not be allowed to cross-examine the child witness. That should be done through an advocate. Those are all sensible and desirable improvements. However, I wonder whether we have got right the proposals for video-recording interviews with child witnesses. I understand the need for that in sexual and violent offences as it saves the child from a courtroom ordeal. Those of us who sit or practise in the courts understand that. However, we must not make it too difficult to test the evidence of children properly in examination-in-chief, where the jury is given an opportunity to see whether the child is likely to be telling the truth, or in cross-examination. We are dealing with a subject in which a jury's horror at the mere allegation of offences against children may be so great that the wrongful conviction of the innocent may occur more easily. I am thinking particularly of identification cases. Proper cross-examination is vital to test for the possibility of

mistakes. Children are no less likely to make mistakes than adults and we know that in a high proportion of criminal cases mistakes have been made about identification. Therefore, we have improved things by changes to our rules.

I am uneasy that the Director of Public Prosecutions should be able to do away with the important filtering stage of committal proceedings in the magistrates courts. The precedent for fraud cases, for which it was considered sensible to do away with committal proceedings, is irrelevant because it is mainly concerned with documentary evidence, which would be very boring, tedious and unlikely to be challenged. However, when considering the correct identification of someone who is alleged to have perpetrated a serious offence, we must treat the proposal that there need be no committal proceeding with more care and perhaps with some unease.

I am uneasy that a child witness should not be examined in chief on any matter that is dealt with in recorded testimony. As the Criminal Bar Association observed in its comments on the Bill, the child witness has still to be judged according to his testimony, and if his evidence is limited that testing becomes impossible. The child must be able to establish himself as a witness, and the jury must be able to see whether the accused person may be innocent from hearing sufficient evidence.

Sixthly, I welcome the first gentle steps towards the introduction of an element of privatisation into the prison system. Provided that the same standard of security continues to apply to escort services, there is no reason why the prison service should be burdened and restricted by the immense amount of time and money that is expended taking prisoners to and from court. An enormous amount of time, energy and expense is involved. If some of it can be shifted to the private sector, the prison service will be relieved of a burden that it does not like and can certainly do without.

Provided security is maintained, I see no reason why there should not be an experiment with the private operation of a remand prison, where, after all, a high proportion of prisoners are presumed innocent and do not therefore require the same supervision or state control that most of us feel is necessary where there has been a sentence of imprisonment. If ever a matter were suitable for an experiment, this is it, and I commend it.

Seventhly, as most crime is committed by teenagers, it is wholly reasonable that parents should be made responsible for the wrongdoing of their children. I therefore welcome the measures to enforce some of that parental responsibility.

Eighthly, I welcome the rationalisation of community sentences.

Ninthly, I see no reason why those who would otherwise be remanded in custody should not be given the opportunity of being tagged while they are on remand if they so wish. Will my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State confirm that the pilot scheme met with some success and that it represents a reasonable expenditure of resources? Opposition Members are anxious to ensure that as few people as possible are kept in prison. Here is a positive measure that would be voluntary. If a prisoner feels humiliated or degraded by being tagged and would rather be in prison, the choice is his. It is such a sensible measure that I am sure that the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook was wrong to oppose it.

Finally, in my view and that of many of my right hon. and hon. Friends and the majority of people outside, one positive step that could be taken to reduce the incidence of serious crime, particularly the killing of innocent people, is the restoration of capital punishment. There is no such provision in the Bill because the Government have always taken the view that that is a matter not for Government but for private conscience. I intend to table a new clause to give the House the opportunity of reconsidering the matter, and I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State will ensure that that debate is taken on the Floor of the House so that the wishes of the people, who know as much about deterrence as any expert, can be taken properly into account and so that they may know that hon. Members take the matter seriously indeed.

5.34 pm

Mr. Peter Archer (Warley, West): The hon. and learned Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) made several comments that I found startling. When the Minister replies, we shall listen with care to see how many of them he endorses. I shall refer to some of them a little later, but I was particularly startled when he asked for evidence that recent Government policies, particularly the short, sharp shock, had failed. If he has a few minutes to spare later, he and I can study the criminal statistics since 1983.

I hope that I shall be forgiven if I confess to a feeling of deja vu. I have long lost count of the number of Criminal Justice Bill debates in which I have participated, but they all have two characteristics in common. The first is that they repeal provisions which in an earlier Bill were hailed as the complete answer to crime. I remember when the partly suspended sentence was greeted as a great penological breakthrough and was duly incorporated in the Criminal Law Act 1977. I do not think that it was a mistake. There are circumstances where it may be an appropriate step, but clause 4 despatches it painlessly into history.

The second characteristic is that each Criminal Justice Bill is a dog's breakfast of assorted provisions as Home Office officials clear their desks of the proposals that have accumulated since the last Criminal Justice Bill. Any connecting thread is invented long after the contents of the Bill have been assembled.

Mr. Patten: Withdraw. Monstrous.

Mr. Archer: I make no comment on the right hon. Gentleman, for whom we have much respect and who does his best, but the Home Office does impose constraints on its Ministers. All I was saying is that it does not facilitate Second Reading debates.

I should perhaps add a third characteristic. A Criminal Justice Bill is usually a compromise between popular slogans and flat reality. The hon. and learned Member for Burton said that the Bill is full of steam. I would have said that there is a certain amount of wind in it rather than steam. I suspect that the compromise in this Bill is between the ringing declaration of the war on crime, which earned the Home Secretary a standing ovation at the Conservative party conference, and the need to reduce the prison population, on which everyone who has attempted to think about the subject, including those who drafted the White Paper, is agreed.

That duality of purpose gives rise to provisions which at best sit uneasily with one another and at worst are

[Mr. Archer]

simply inconsistent. We are told in clause 2 that the punishment must be commensurate with the seriousness of the offence—a principle which can be delivered in dramatic terms at a party conference. If it means anything in clause 2, according to the ordinary rules of construction of the English language, it means that every sentence must be a tariff sentence and that there should be no individualised acts of mercy to take account of individual circumstances. In other words, the court cannot take account of mitigation.

I cannot believe that that is the intended meaning of the clause, otherwise the Bill would abolish probation and community service. I think that it was intended to mean that no one should be imprisoned for longer than he deserves, except in the specific circumstances outlined in the clause. But that would sound much less robust from a party platform.

While we are on that subject, we find that, under clause 4, section 28 of the Powers of Criminal Courts Act 1973 is to be repealed. Our unpopular friend, the extended sentence, is to be laid to rest. Now people are to be sentenced for what they have done, not for what it is feared that they may do. A fundamental principle of retributive justice is re-established: no one should receive a harsher sentence than he or she deserves. But scarcely is it carried out of the back door when, in clause 2(2)(b), as bold as brass and scarcely disguised, it comes swaggering back in through the front door.

Mr. Waddington: With respect, I think that the right hon. and learned Gentleman would agree that the extended sentence which followed preventive detention provided machinery whereby someone could be given longer than the maximum sentence laid down by statute for an offence. That is what we are talking about in the case of an extended sentence. In clause 2 we are talking about the circumstances in which someone can get a longer sentence than that which would normally be justified by the offence, but still a sentence within the absolute maximum laid down by statute for that offence. It has nothing to do with extended sentences.

Mr. Archer: In each case, the statute prescribes a maximum and then says that, in certain circumstances, one can exceed the maximum.

Mr. Waddington: No. With respect, we are careful to say in clause 2 that, although one can impose a longer sentence than that justified by the gravity of the offence, in the interests of protecting the community that sentence must still be within the statutory maximum for that offence.

Mr. Archer: In each case, the principle is that, in certain circumstances, someone may receive a sentence that is harsher than he or she would otherwise have deserved, not because of the circumstances of the offence, but because of other considerations. No doubt we shall debate that principle in Committee.

Mr. Patten: I hope that the right hon. and learned Gentleman will not be on the Standing Committee.

Mr. Archer: What did the right hon. Gentleman say?

Mr. Patten: I was only reminiscing to myself from a sedentary position, but I have been lured to the Dispatch Box by the right hon. and learned Gentleman. I was reminiscing about his performance in the Standing Committee on the last Criminal Justice Bill. I said sotto voce that I hoped that he would not be on this one, because I remember a few holes below the waterline. It sounds as though the right hon. and learned Gentleman is making threatening noises about serving again.

Mr. Archer: Far be it from me to hole the right hon. Gentleman below the waterline, but I think that in Standing Committee we might cause a certain amount of damage to his gun turrets.

The White Paper, with its promising title "Crime, Justice and Protecting the Public", begins by announcing that it proposes

"a coherent legislative framework for sentencing".

That sounds hopeful. Perhaps there is to be a clear, logical set of proposals which the courts can have in mind. Perhaps it will be simpler, without a multiplicity of technicalities, to trip the courts, which have enough to occupy their minds getting through their lists, doing justice in individual cases, taking account of all the things they are told about the offence and the offender, without having to look out for an array of trip-wires.

Perhaps this legislative framework will clarify the relationship between the legislature, which lays down policy; the Court of Appeal, which offers guidelines from time to time, but understandably on a sparing basis; and the courts, which have to consider the individual appearing before them. The Court of Appeal, of course, deals only with sentences which at least to some already appear too long, so it deals with a fairly self-selecting group of sentences.

In the event, the Bill does not really improve on the Mikado's rule of thumb that the punishment should fit the crime and, as in every Criminal Justice Bill, the trip-wires are moved about and rearranged, just as we were getting used to where they were left after the last Criminal Justice Bill.

Mr. Waddington: Does not the right hon. and learned Gentleman realise that this Criminal Justice Bill differs from other ones because it builds on the success of other Bills which were passed only a short time ago? The central theme in the Bill is that we should extend over the whole age range the disciplines which were imposed on the court in terms of young offenders in the 1982 and 1988 Criminal Justice Acts. I think that the right hon. and learned Gentleman would agree that those two Acts have been conspicuously successful—although not agreed by the Labour party—in that the number of young people sent to prison has decreased, as my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) pointed out.

Mr. Archer: If the right hon. and learned Gentleman is dealing with the restrictions on imposing custodial sentences, he certainly will not face any objection from me nor has he incurred any objection from Labour Members. If the Bill had confined itself to that provision, that would have been the end of the debate—unhappily, it did not.

The Bill fails to introduce greater consistency in sentencing. There may be reasons for the inconsistencies between Wood Green and Mold, to which my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) referred, but those who have considered it find it puzzling. The Bill offers no solution. Is there not a case for the sentencing council proposed by my right hon.

Friend? It could offer carefully considered guidelines with a freedom which is not open to the Court of Appeal in individual cases. The hon. and learned Member for Burton, who is in his place but not really with us, was talking complete nonsense when he said that somehow this is to cast aspersions on the courts. To say that the courts cannot do more than a court can be expected to do is not to cast an aspersion.

Would this really be a total breach of the separation of powers, particularly if the sentencing council consisted primarily of judges, as I hope it would, although I hope that it would co-opt probation officers and a few academics, and possibly a Home Office Minister? I believe that many judges would welcome that assistance.

The proposal in clause 48 is that parents of young offenders may be bound over to exercise proper control, as though they were the criminals. That may have some populist appeal, but it raises some fundamental questions in theory and in practice. The Home Secretary is really proposing that parents who may have done their best and who do not understand where they went wrong—which he said was not his intention—are to be branded as a criminal family. There is some authority, at least in the Old Testament, for the proposition that the sins of the father should be visited on the children, but I know of no authority for the converse proposition.

If someone is liable to forfeit a large sum of money, surely it should be crystal clear what that person is required to do in order not to forfeit it. I found the Home Secretary's reply to my intervention unconvincing. How are parents to know what they must do not to be found to have failed to exercise proper control? Are they to watch their sons and daughters every waking moment? Are they to refuse to let them out of the house? Are they to follow them when they go out? If there is any room for misunderstanding, they may—in addition to all the other distress which they will suffer from a further conviction of a son or daughter—suffer what to them will appear as a personal fine. I hope that they will not be required in some way to produce evidence of the control which they have exercised over their children. That will do more harm than good.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Often one of the problems is that the two parents have different views on what exactly is the right behaviour for a youngster, and those conflicting views often cause difficulty for the youngster. Surely it is important that both parents know exactly what the courts require so that they can come to an agreement on how they will supervise their son or daughter.

Mr. Archer: I agree with my hon. Friend. All of us who have reared teenage children know that being too inquisitive can sometimes cause more problems than it solves.

Of course, the White Paper is right—we should take account of the needs of victims, actual and potential. I believe that the courts are making good use of compensation orders. There may be a case for considering how we could involve victims further in the disposal of criminal cases. And we need to protect potential victims. Surely the purpose of penal policy is primarily to reduce crime, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Sparkbrook said. If it could be shown that longer sentences had an appreciably deterrent effect, they would be a positive contribution to reducing crime, but we seem to be rather stronger on strident slogans than on hard evidence.

No one now believes that prisons have a reforming effect, especially when every attempt at education or at training is frustrated by the desperate undermanning of the prison service. But the public will not benefit if those who serve sentences return to liberty coarsened, brutalised and embittered, and having had the benefit of a refresher course on crime from other criminals. If our object were to maximise crime, we might design institutions exactly like the majority of our existing prisons. I do not believe that privatisation is an answer to that problem.

If the Government were serious about reducing crime, they should invest more resources in better public lighting, in replacing subways with pelican crossings, and in subsidising security locks and burglar alarms for elderly people. They could even provide the police authorities with the resources for which they are asking.

I shall not weary the House with what I have said many times before, but year after year the West Midlands police authority has calculated carefully the additional manpower it requires to carry out its statutory duties. Year after year, without explanation or argument, the Home Office has authorised only a small fraction of that additional manpower.

Mr. John P. Smith (Vale of Glamorgan): The Home Secretary implied earlier that there are more, not fewer, policemen on the streets of Britain. I recently had the honour of going out with our police in the seaside town of Barry to see how they deal with a crime rate which has reached epidemic proportions and which is affecting the quality of life of tens of thousands of my constituents. I was horrified to see how many policemen were on duty on a Saturday night. The figure is so bad that I am not at liberty to quote it because if the criminals in our town knew how many police were on duty they would riot.

Mr. Archer: I am sure that my hon. Friend is right and I wish that the Home Office would listen to police authorities when they tell it what manpower they need.

Most importantly of all, the Government should reflect on the fact that the most effective deterrent to crime for the potential offender is the disapproval of his peer group. Teenagers in deprived areas are encouraged to turn to crime because other teenagers in the area regard it as a status symbol. If such teenagers can be won over to the side of law and order, that would be the greatest protection for the victims of crime. The places where the environment is best protected and where vandalism is at a minimum are where local teenagers have been enlisted to clean up the area and will, therefore, ensure that their commitment is not wasted.

If the Government re-read the Scarman report, if they read "Faith in the City" for the first time, if they spared more resources for youth services before the young person is on bail and if they encouraged school teachers to believe that their extra-curricular activities were properly valued, they could achieve a multiplicity of objectives. They could reduce the cost of vandalism, they could reduce the prison budget, they could save the time of the courts, and they could help to safeguard potential victims of crime.

The position would be helped if potential offenders saw the penal system as fair. It is not true, as the hon. and learned Member for Burton asserted, that the colour of

[Mr. Archer]

one's skin makes no difference to how one is treated in the penal system. I will not repeat the statistic to which my right hon. Friend the Member for Sparkbrook referred, but if, as the hon. and learned Member for Burton said, the problem is that the majority of coloured people are unable economically to comply with the conditions required by the Bail Act 1976, would not that in itself be a reason for disquiet and would not it mean that the colour of a person's skin was related to his treatment in the penal system?

Mr. Lawrence: The right hon. and learned Gentleman is taking a pretty tough line with me. When he sits as a recorder, on what basis does he consider whether a person should be granted bail?

Mr. Archer: I apply the conditions in the Bail Act. However, I find that a fair number of black people are unable to comply with the conditions in the Act because they are homeless, jobless or have been discriminated against. If the hon. and learned Member for Burton finds that satisfactory——

Mr. Lawrence *rose*——

Mr. Archer: I must end this dialogue as I have gone on for too long.

Mr. Lawrence: Answer the question.

Mr. Archer: I am prepared to debate the matter with the hon. and learned Gentleman on another occasion.

Mr. Lawrence *rose*——

Mr. Archer: If there is no other solution, I will give way.

Mr. Lawrence: In the circumstances to which he has referred, would the right hon. and learned Gentleman give bail for serious offences, such as mugging?

Mr. Archer: I ask that the Government direct their mind to the fact that for economic reasons, among others, fewer black people than white people obtain bail. If we can agree on that, we may have made some progress and perhaps the hon. and learned Member for Burton will now talk to members of his own Front Bench.

I understand that the Home Secretary cannot achieve all those objectives without the co-operation of his colleagues in the Government. He is not the Prime Minister—although, by the end of this week, who knows? He could try to persuade his colleagues that there are more cost-effective ways of investing money in crime reduction than to keep offenders in prison without parole for longer periods. If he did so, he would not earn a standing ovation at the next Conservative party conference, but he might earn a place in history, and he would certainly earn the thanks of my constituents.

5.55 pm

Mr. Michael Shersby (Uxbridge): As the House knows, I am the parliamentary adviser to the Police Federation of England and Wales. I wish to declare that interest in participating in the debate.

The Bill is long and complex. I am not a lawyer, but I welcome some of its provisions and I have enjoyed listening to the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer) and to my hon. and learned Friend Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence), who are lawyers all benefit from hearing their views.

I give a general welcome to the new framework for sentencing of offenders. I support the provisions which designed to protect the public from serious harm offenders and the powers given to the courts in cla which provide that the length of the custodial sente commensurate with the seriousness of the offence constituents have been pressing for longer sentenc violent crime and for sexual offences. They will be p that a Crown court may pass sentence up to the max for the offence. The House knows that the Gover also wish to reduce the prison population and to dea less serious offenders by means of non-custodial sent

However, on behalf of the police, I must say that opinion of the Police Federation—which I share—th one offence for which there should be a mand custodial sentence. It should be passed on those con of assaults that have occasioned actual bodily harm police officer in the exercise of his duty. The fede called for that sentence at its 1987 central confe reflecting the increasing concern among the police the number of assaults, which is escalating unacceptable level. I call again today for a mand sentence for those who attack the protectors of the so that such people may be in no doubt that if they a police officer they will go to prison.

Sir Charles Irving (Cheltenham): Is not eve entitled to that protection? Should it be restricted o police officers?

Mr. Shersby: I note my hon. Friend's point. I kn I am sure he does, that the Home Office does not ge like mandatory sentences because it is concerned abo possible pressure to apply them to other offences. M Friend has made the point well for me. However, Home Office view prevails, there must be at lea exception if the increasing number of assaults on the is to be stopped. The federation is disappointed absence of such a mandatory sentence, so I will, the press for its inclusion at later stages of the Bill. I hop my right hon. Friend the Minister of State will give thought to the serious problem of assaults on officers and that he will consider most careful possibility of accepting such a provision being intro into the Bill.

I recognise that the policy of my right hon. and l Friend the Home Secretary is not to encourage cu sentences where community sentences can be used alternative. It will be interesting to see the extent to probation orders and community service orders combination of the two, or the proposed curfew or well as the supervision order or a period at an atte centre, will be satisfactory alternatives to cu sentences. I am sure that it is right to try them. The be problems in implementing them, however, and the problems may be the additional burdens placed the police.

Mr. John P. Smith: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. As the ballot for the leader of the majority in the House has now finished, do you think th House should be suspended while we discover who to be the Prime Minister of Britain?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): I think that we would be better advised to get on with the debate.

Mr. Shersby: Before I was interrupted by that non-point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was saying—this is an important matter and I hope that Opposition Members are listening—that it is important that the resource implications for the police in carrying into effect non-custodial orders are given the most careful consideration.

Clause 3 makes provision for pre-sentence reports to assist courts in deciding whether to impose a custodial sentence. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Minister of State will tell the House who will keep details of previous offences that must be taken into account. It is not always easy to provide that information.

Clause 8 deals with probation and discharge. I am somewhat puzzled by subsection (2). Perhaps my right hon. Friend the Minister of State will explain why payment of sums awarded by way of damages for injury or compensation for loss shall not be included among the additional requirements of a probation order.

The introduction of curfew orders and electronic tagging has already caused a good deal of discussion. I must tell my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary and my right hon. Friend the Minister of State that the federated ranks of the police need to be convinced of the merits of the innovation, about which they are less than enthusiastic. They take the view that it is difficult to operate and that the recent experiment was not particularly successful, due in no small measure to the ineffectiveness of the technology that is involved. Concern has been expressed to me also about the additional burden which could fall on the police, where manpower is already stretched to the limit. It will always be the police who have to pick up the responsibility for dealing with curfew orders and electronic tagging when the system goes wrong. They will have to bear the burden. Why have the Government decided to introduce these measures when the only information that the federation has from the forces that have tried them is that they are not especially successful?

Having made those comments in a spirit of friendly and constructive criticism, I say to the House generally that the police greatly welcome the inclusion in the Bill of part III, and especially the provision that evidence given by children can be unsworn. Equally welcome are the provisions in clauses 42 to 45, which will enable the use of video recordings of testimony of child witnesses.

The federation is slightly disappointed, however, that children will be required to give evidence under cross-examination via a live video link at the time of trial. The House will recall that the advisory group on video evidence, which was chaired by Judge Pigot, recommended that

"arrangements should be made to hold a preliminary hearing in informal surroundings out of court as soon as practicable."

It may be that I have not fully grasped what my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary said when he commented on this part of the Bill during his opening remarks. If I have misunderstood what he said, I hope that my right hon. Friend the Minister of State will correct me. I wonder why the use of video recordings made out of court in informal surroundings is not included in the Bill. After all, the Pigot inquiry took evidence from every interested party, and it was unanimous in its recommendations.

I welcome the proposals in clauses 46 to 48 to require the attendance of parents at proceedings which involve their children when they, the children, are under the age of 16 years. The requirement is coupled with the power of courts to require the parents of 16 and 17-year-olds to pay their financial penalties, plus the power to bind over the parents of offenders who are under the age of 18 years to take proper care and exercise proper control of their children, and to fine parents who refuse unreasonably to be bound over. These provisions represent a powerful new set of deterrents to juvenile delinquents.

I listened with great care to the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West when he referred to the innovations which I have just mentioned. It seems that the power of the courts to deal with parents who have unreasonably refused to be bound over will provide a good deal of flexibility within the system and should not lead to undue problems. The federation welcomes the innovations and hopes that they will be successful.

Having complimented my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary on the parts of the Bill which either the police or I, or both of us, welcome, I turn to the more controversial new provisions for court security officers, and for escort duties to be carried out by prisoner custody officers. It is right that I should tell the House that the federation is uneasy about these important duties being carried out by the private sector. The federation's main objection—it is a staff federation and the House will understand how it feels—is that the public may not feel as secure if these duties are not carried out by well-trained, tried and trusted officers who have operated successfully for a long time in the public sector.

When my right hon. Friend the Minister of State replies, I hope that he will tell the House what training the officers will receive. I hope also that he will outline the vetting that will have been carried out before their recruitment and appointment by whoever will be responsible for that job. I understand that in the borough which comes within my constituency the body responsible will be the borough council. How will these officers be accountable as police officers are accountable? These are important questions, and they need to be answered if the police are to move away from their present position of unease about the proposed changes. The public must be clear that they will not be put at risk as a result of the changes. I hope that my right hon. Friend will tell us what estimate has been made of the reduction in public expenditure that will be achieved by the proposed contracting out.

The federation is concerned about the concept of remand prisons being contracted out to the private sector. Its concern centres on the training and vetting that is to take place of the individuals who will be engaged and on the safety of the public. The director of a contracted-out remand centre is to be a prisoner custody officer. The new controller is to be a Crown servant. Perhaps my right hon. Friend the Minister of State will give more information to the House, either today or later, about the sort of training and the background that these individuals will have when it comes to them carrying out their responsible duties.

The duties are set out clearly in the Bill, but the Bill does not go into the detail which hon. Members will need if they are properly to assess the way in which the centres will work. There has been much criticism in recent months about some of the private security companies that operate.

[Mr. Shersby]

That has not been confined to the Tricks. There is a general feeling of unease. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Minister of State will be able to set that right.

Mr. Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield): Is it not a fact that unless there is regulation of the private security industry, which the Government have been shy to introduce prior to the Queen's Speech, in the Queen's Speech or in the Bill, cowboy operators will be able to tender for the contracts, with dreadful results? Regulations must accompany the proposed innovations.

Mr. Shersby: That concern must be addressed and set aside. I supported the private Member's Bill in the name of the hon. Member for Walsall, South (Mr. George). There should be independent regulation of the security industry, and I am not ashamed to state that in this debate.

I welcome the Bill, which contains many good things. I wish it well in Committee and I hope to have an opportunity to contribute to it again later and to put forward proposals on matters that are of great concern to the police, particularly the question of assault.

6.10 pm

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): The hon. Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) referred to the practical concerns of the police with regard to escort duties and the contracting out of remand centres. Several issues of principle are also troubling people. Those who are responsible for depriving a citizen of liberty should also ensure that the responsibility for the custody of those citizens lies in the hands of the state.

The Bill marks an important step forward for our criminal justice system. It is a major Bill and not all of it is uncontroversial. However, it provides a major change in a healthy direction, which should have a practical effect on sentencing in particular and move us closer to a society that is less dependent on custodial sentencing as the normal response to crime.

In particular, I welcome the requirement to give reasons for custodial sentences. I also welcome the proposal that there should be a pre-sentence report in the hands of the sentencer before sentence is announced. I particularly welcome the extension of the unit fine experiment to magistrates courts relating the penalties imposed to a defendant's ability to pay. However, I do not know why the Government have not extended that principle to Crown court proceedings, and perhaps the Minister will comment on that when he replies.

Having begun in that vein, it is inevitable in our customary adversarial proceedings that I should focus on the Bill's deficiencies and also refer to the matters that are omitted from the Bill. After the Home Secretary's rather robust remarks at the Conservative party conference, about victims, I was rather surprised that the Bill contained nothing to give effect to his proposals. I was surprised that the Bill contained nothing to ensure that victims know whether those alleged to have been responsible for their suffering have been caught and, if so, when and where they would be tried. At the Conservative party conference, the Home Secretary also spoke about ensuring that the courts were fully informed of the loss suffered by a victim and that the courts would have the necessary facts to make proper compensation orders. The Bill offered an apt opportunity to give effect t proposals, which no doubt the Home Secretary be be important.

Mr. John Patten: With regard to victims, February or March my right hon. and learned Fr Home Secretary issued a victim's charter, which a list of questions that are subject to consultatio moment—the victim support world and others wil their views about them. We have not yet reached when we can form conclusions and so ensure matters to which the hon. Gentleman referred c such a state of grace as to be ready for inclusion such as this. However, those matters are very muc agenda for the future. I look forward to hearing Gentleman's views in due course.

Mr. Maclennan: It is becoming increasingly whether the right hon. Gentleman will have a f that kind in ministerial office, so some of us will t assurance with a grain of reserve.

Mr. Patten: You are a boring old windbag.

Mr. Maclennan: The Minister sounds rather drone to my bagpipes.

The Bill marks an important step towards redu use of custodial sentences for less serious offences, cannot happen too soon. I want to refer once ag serious incoherence in the legal framework of our law, which the Bill, for all its virtues, d systematically tackle.

Conservative Home Secretaries have a prop think up new crimes and to increase penalties to every social evil. Following the recent Calcutt r privacy, there was a proposal for a new crime of trespass. Following the Taylor report on the Hills stadium disaster, there were proposals for new add to the already quite remarkable battery of pul offences that were recently enacted. Follow Strangeways riot, the Home Secretary propose crime of prison mutiny. All those proposals ma comforting headlines in the tabloid press such Crackdown on Crime", but they do nothing to en our criminal law matches the settled view of so therefore the relative seriousness of different anti-social behaviour.

Why have the Government taken no step tow codification of the criminal law, the case for w been advocated for many years, which was fir hand by my right hon. Friend Lord Jenkins of H 1968 and on which the Law Commission working? The Law Commission produced an important report, No. 177, with a draft criminal attached, together with a detailed commentar proposals. It is the most exhaustive and authorita on the rationalising of our criminal justice syste has been almost ignored by the Government Parliament. I referred to it inevitably briefl contribution to the debate on the Loyal Addres

That codification should commend itself Government as the best starting point for the ov our criminal law. The former Lord Chancell Hailsham, commended the Law Commission's r said that it could save a great deal of anxiety, consumption of judicial time and so of costs. particular importance to the reduction that spee

would make in the number of remanded prisoners in our overcrowded gaols. The proper parliamentary procedure for scrutinising such a proposed code would be the establishment of a pre-legislative committee to take evidence and report to Parliament on its contents. Until such a step is taken, our system in England and Wales will continue to suffer from the patchwork of more than 7,200 separate criminal offences being added to inconsistently. That is the major omission, not only from the Bill but from the Government's approach to the reform of criminal law.

However, several matters also merit being raised, and they flow directly from the Bill. Paramount among them is the absence of discussion of the necessary additional resources that must be made available to the probation service in particular and to the police if the Government's objectives in respect of non-custodial sentencing are to be achieved. Part of the patchwork of the inconsistency of sentencing may be explainable in terms of the patchwork of local resources in different areas. The non-availability, for example, of bail hostels in some cases may make it more difficult for sentencers such as the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer) to deal with such matters in the manner that plainly is the objective of both sides of the House. Resources are integral to the success of the Government's proposals and it would be helpful to hear more than a few pious words from the Minister of State on that subject.

In an exchange between the two Front Benches, there was a rather helpful discussion of the possibility of taking forward the concerns that have been widely expressed about the existence of racial discrimination within our criminal justice system. Frankly, the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) is a little unreal in his approach. I found the Home Secretary's attitude in response to my intervention in his speech a good deal more encouraging than that of his hon. and learned Friend. The case for a declaratory provision in the Bill is overwhelming —not simply one that sets out the law of the land as it is, but one that sets out the law of the land as it should be. It should go further and provide statutory requirements to monitor what is happening and to back up the provisions of the general principle.

I share the view that has been expressed on several occasions in the House, that the greatest defect in our sentencing structure at the moment is the inability of the Court of Appeal to produce not uniformity but some coherence in sentencing. The establishment of a sentencing council has merit. It would not supplant the role of judges, but it would help judges. That body would be not wholly judicial in composition, but would involve the participation of many who have knowledge of other parts of the criminal system and, indeed, lay people who could bring to bear upon matters public perceptions of sentencing needs and requirements.

In so far as it deals with problems in our prisons, the Bill does so only indirectly. It proposes little that would directly ameliorate the conditions of our outmoded prisons. I do not entirely blame the Government for that, for they are rightly waiting for the report of Lord Justice Woolf's inquiry following the Strangeways riots. But, given that the Government are holding out on several important reforms, they have decided to do one or two things of extremely doubtful use, not least the decision to allow the contracting-out of remand centres to the private sector, which seems at best irrelevant and, at worst, a surrender of the proper responsibility of the state. The administration of justice and the deprivation of liberty should not in principle be contracted out.

Comparable criticisms may be made of the proposals to privatise the prison escort service. I, like others, know well of the diversion of resources that the present arrangements cause, but the Government have embarked on the wrong solution to the problem. It is hard to justify the view that the Home Secretary propounded, that the experience of curfew and tagging has been successful. It has been described by penal reformers as a fiasco. I am bound to say that it has a minimal part to play at this stage in our penal system. If there is a case for continuing the experiment that is all that one can say in favour of it. I do not think that it should have gone further until there was greater evidence of how it could work in practice. The Government sometimes claim credit for being essentially practical and take some pride in not having a principled approach, but, on practical grounds, I do not think that tagging has been demonstrated to work effectively.

There is an important confusion that the Home Secretary did not altogether succeed in dispelling. Clause 3 deals with whether previous convictions should be taken into account when dealing with a sentence before the court —*[Interruption.]* I sense a certain excitement, which, I am bound to say, has very little to do with the remarks that I am making.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): I am surprised that there should be such excitement on the Benches at this time. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will continue.

Mr. Maclennan: I am glad to have my view entirely endorsed by you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The hon. and learned Member for Burton made a powerful and important point, and I hope that the Minister of State will deal with it. Therefore, I shall make that point in my way, too. I refer to the avoidance of committal proceedings in cases involving sexual offences and violence against children, which will seriously curtail the rights of the accused. I have seen the argument of the Criminal Bar Association that the power of the Director of Public Prosecutions should not be capable of delegation and that case requires to be answered.

The Bill makes extensive proposals to change the powers and operation of parole and early release. I shall make only a couple of brief points. The most important requirement is that parole should be reconstituted with proper regard to due process safeguards. Prisoners should be entitled to be heard and have legal representation. The Bill does not make those proposals. They seem to be a necessary part of our system. Unless the Bill's proposals for parole are accompanied by wider reductions in maximum sentences than are advanced, there is a serious risk that the prison population will rise.

The public is undoubtedly most concerned about the ineffectiveness of the Government's measures to prevent crime. The success or otherwise of the Bill will, to a degree, be judged by whether it contributes to a reduction in crime. The single most important step that the Government could take to reduce crime and the fear of crime would be to strengthen measures for youth crime prevention. Young people under 21 commit almost half all recorded crime and three quarters of the burglaries in this country. The peak age of offending for boys is between 15 and 1

[Mr. Maclennan]

Young men and women are the most frequent victims of crime, contrary to the general perception that the elderly in our society are the most vulnerable. That perception was shared by the electors of Eastbourne who were reluctant to open their doors after 7.30 in the evening. I assume that the Minister of State has recently had that experience.

There is a considerable need to tackle the problem of youth crime more systematically than the Government have tackled it. We need greater positive recreational training and employment opportunities to be co-ordinated locally with the young themselves. Volunteers, as well as paid workers, should play an important part in that task.

The Minister is probably already familiar with the experience of the French Government at central, regional and local level and their striking success in tackling the problem of youth crime. They have programmes of summer activities for the young; youth centres in cities and towns; the positive involvement of ethnic minorities in mainstream social and sporting activities; and projects that are targeted at job acquisition, social integration and confidence building, as well as local crime prevention schemes. Those measures have had dramatic effects and the French crime statistics show encouraging downward trends, especially for the offences that are most often committed by the young.

Mr. Sheerman: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that he is wasting his breath making those points to this Government, because the schemes in France to which he referred involve a lo. of money and resources and are locally controlled—two things to which the Government would never agree?

Mr. Maclennan: It would cost a great deal less to do those things than to keep people in prison. The Government should address that issue as a matter of practicality if they want to make public expenditure savings. Of course, I do not commend such measures only on those grounds, but because I believe that they would be effective in the interests of the young and of society.

The Bill deals with some matters affecting young people, especially—and controversially—the new provisions on parental responsibility. The clauses that increase the sanctions against the parents of young offenders are, in my view, mistaken and probably unworkable and, in their punitive nature, they are certainly unwise. The Home Secretary, who sometimes betrays a lack of awareness about what is going on in his own Department, should have noticed the findings of John Graham, which were published in Home Office research bulletin No. 26 of 1989, which states:

"Since the ability of families to function effectively is thought to be a crucial determinant in preventing juvenile delinquency, there is an increasingly pressing need to determine how policies to support families and parents can be developed."

Clause 21, which provides that the courts may apply to have fines recovered by deduction from income support, puts precisely the kind of pressure on families that the research of the Home Office itself shows to be likely to lead to delinquency. If such deductions are tolerable, they should be considered, as in cases of rent default, only if they are voluntarily agreed by the defendant——

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I do not want to interrupt the hon. Gentleman's speech, but there happening outside the Chamber, of which aware, and which has enormous implication for the people of Scotland. Parts of the Bill ability to pay certain fines. The right hon. Henley (Mr. Heseltine) made part of his leadership of his party the question of the abili poll tax. There is clearly no majority in the H tax, which was imposed on the people of Sc Act that was passed in this Parliament in 19 that the Government and the Opposition immediately to have that Act, which was imp people of Scotland, removed from the statu should take immediate steps to suspend the

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Douglas: In view of the fact that peopl are being poinded——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I as Gentleman to resume his seat. That is no before the House. I call Mr. Maclennan.

Mr. Maclennan *rose*——

Mr. Cryer: On a point of order, Mad Speaker. Have you had notice from the L House to announce the verdict of the elec Conservative leader, in which the Prime Min votes and the challenger 152? In the circumsta absence of any clear Government—is not it Leader of the House came to the House, dissolution and called a general election?

Several Hon. Members: On a point of or Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I can h hon. Member at a time.

Mr. Norris: Further to that point of or Deputy Speaker. I quite appreciate the ex Opposition Benches—there is a fair Conservative Benches. Anticipating catchi Madam Deputy Speaker, and knowing of yo on the stage, it reminds one of being the comi on before the strippers at the Windmill. The are considering is important—indeed, by com it is the most important of this Session—and inappropriate to delay our further co *[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. While Chair, the business of the House will not be d happens outside the Chamber is, of course, in a distraction, but it is not for debate in the C Mr. Maclennan.

Mr. Maclennan *rose*——

Mr. Jim Sillars (Glasgow, Govan): On a p Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker: May I have an a this does not relate to points that I have alrea

Mr. Sillars: I am afraid that it does.

Madam Deputy Speaker: In that case, I h it——

Mr. Sillars *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: I shall hear the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Sillars: Is it in order at this stage, Madam Deputy Speaker, to move, That the Question be now put, so that the Government and the Leader of the House can have an early opportunity to come before the House to make a statement about the Government's intention with respect to the poll tax because, obviously, the Government no longer have a majority for it in the House? If it is in order to do so, I should like to move the Question.

Madam Deputy Speaker: It is in order to move that Question, but it is not in order for me to accept the motion at this stage.

Mr. Hattersley: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. You will know that this evening the Opposition have tabled a motion of no confidence in the Government. That motion reflects the national feeling that a Government who are split by bitter civil war should resign. The House is now put in a quandary. We know that Conservative Members no longer support the Prime Minister, but we do not know whom, if anyone, they will recommend to replace her. Tonight Britain is effectively leaderless. The House of Commons must clearly debate those unprecedented circumstances, and precedent requires that a debate on a no confidence motion be tabled at the earliest possible opportunity. I therefore ask that the date of the debate, and, for that matter, who will speak in it to defend the Government's position, be announced to the House at 10 o'clock tonight.

Mr. John Patten: Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I shall draw the right hon. Gentleman's remarks to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I was about to say to the House that I am, of course, aware that a censure motion has been tabled by the Leader of the Opposition. I have more than an inkling that the usual channels will be hot-foot operating on it right at this moment and that a statement will be made to the House at the earliest opportunity.

Mr. Cryer: Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Maclennan *rose*——

Mr. Douglas *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) has already raised one point of order with me——

Mr. Cryer: This is on another matter, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Very well, if it is on another matter, I shall hear it.

Mr. Cryer: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. All hon. Members are aware of what is happening. My right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) has read out a statement. Surely, in such circumstances it is not good enough for the Minister who happens to be on the Government Front Bench to say that he will draw attention of the Leader of the House to the motion of confidence in the Government. The Leader of the Ho should be here. I ask the Minister to ask the Leader of House to come to the Chamber and make a statem about——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order, As I have alre explained, the Leader of the House—*[Interruption.]*

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. We cannot conti with points of order that are irrelevant to the busir before us—*[Interruption.]* Order. Hon. Members h heard what I had to say on this matter. It is being discus through the usual channels. As soon as the Leader of House is ready to make a statement, he will do so.

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): Further to t point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Surely we can proceed with business as usual as though nothing happened. We are in an unprecedented position beca the Prime Minister does not enjoy the support of majority of the House. We cannot continue as tho nothing has happened. The Leader of the House has come to the Chamber. Surely he has already prepa statement A and statement B to deal with all poss eventualities. The eventuality is now clear—the Pr Minister has lost the confidence of the House. We awai appropriate statement from the Leader of the House.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentler deploys arguments that should be deployed during debate on the motion of no confidence.

Mr. Hattersley: I am as anxious as anyone to proc with the debate, and that can be easily achieved. Leader of the House knows that we have asked for, are entitled to, a date for the debate on the motion of confidence, and for the names of those who will speak the Government in that debate. The right hon. Gentler has only to get up and tell us that, and we can t continue with the debate.

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of House of Commons (Mr. John MacGregor): Further that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I agree the right hon. Gentleman that it is important to conti with this important debate. It may assist the House if I that I intend to make a business statement at 10 o'clo

Madam Deputy Speaker: Perhaps we can now proc with the debate. I call Mr. Maclennan—*[Interrupti* Order. Would those hon. Members who are leaving Chamber do so quietly, so that we can at least conti with the business before us?

Mr. Maclennan: It was, perhaps, ironic that moment that the hon. Member for Dunfermline, W (Mr. Douglas) raised his point of order, I was abou commend to the Minister the Scottish model and mar for dealing with parental involvement in the sentenc process, which should involve a round-table discussion the children's panel. I believe that that proposal is gre preferred to the new measures that the Bill seeks to imp on parents. In particular, the Bill's proposals for binding over of parents of young offenders have not with the widespread approval of many sentencers, so Government should reconsider clauses 47 and 48.

[Mr. Maclennan]

It is a matter of the utmost urgency that we do not simply tinker with the remand and sentencing system for juveniles in the custody of the prison department. The Home Secretary intervened earlier to say that, as I understood it, the Government intended to move towards ending the remand and sentencing policy that has led to the appalling suicides of young people in our prisons—not only in Armley prison in Leeds, but in a number of other prisons. What has been happening is not simply an intolerable aberration from the high standards of our prison service, but something that calls into question the policies for the sentencing of juveniles and their detention within the prison system.

Most people are deeply shocked by what has happened. The report by Judge Tumim on Armley prison is confirmation, if that were needed, that the present system is badly in need of overhaul. I hope that, before the Bill is enacted, that matter will have been dealt with both adequately and terminally.

As I said, the Bill marks out a new policy and departs from the old policy in a way that could lead to the prison population falling to levels commensurate with those of comparable European countries. We are far behind them in that respect and we have a long way to go. In so far as the Bill assists that, it will enjoy the support of my right hon. and hon. Friends. Its deficiencies, which are more of omission than commission, will not lead us to vote against its Second Reading.

6.47 pm

Mr. Steve Norris (Epping Forest): I wish first to deal with a matter that was raised by my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence), and which was taken up by the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer)—the existence or otherwise of racial discrimination in disposals. Contrary to the view expressed by my hon. and learned Friend, it is of great concern that the statistics published by the Home Office —and I stress the fact that they are published by the Home Office—show that there is troubling evidence of differential disposal methods for ethnic minorities. It does not greatly assist us to pretend that those differences arise simply for socio-economic reasons unrelated to race. I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Minister is greatly concerned about that and will do everything possible to ensure that that discrimination, if it exists, is eradicated.

I am concerned that Opposition Members who have adduced that evidence, and leapt from that to a sentencing council, have missed the point. The point is not the existence or otherwise of discrimination. If it exists, it is intolerable and should be immediately eradicated. I am sure that no Conservative or Opposition Member would tolerate such discrimination. However, we are considering whether the current mechanisms to oversee sentencing now need to be swept aside and replaced by a sentencing council, and of that I am much less sure. The right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) made it clear that his proposed sentencing council would examine the records of courts and judges, presumably to ensure that their sentencing and their disposals were broadly in line with what would be expected. Of course, that would simply identify exactly the same aberrations, such as they are, as are currently being identified by the Home Office and published by it. After all, the racial discrimination or otherwise have con Home Office.

More importantly, there currently exists a that includes the Court of Appeal's gui Magistrates Association's tariff guidelines guidelines on sentencing, of which courts are a account. The problem is obvious to anyone v any experience of disposals in courts. Each c treated, either by lay magistrates or by profess as an individual case. Judges rightly endeavo sentence to the crime.

In remand cases, for example, individua must be made of the status of the individuals w to be eligible for, or rather suffer from, remand What is much less clear, however, is that council could effect remand disposals. If we that into actual disposals after conviction, council provide us with any better framewo which exists? I have an open mind on this issu forward to the debates we shall have on it in C on Report. I would support anything tha prevented the present anomalies that occasion sentencing. I am, however, unconvinced of t the sentencing council, even bearing in mind situation that underpins the basic thrust of th

I am happy to extend a warm welcome t believe that the restrictions on imposin sentences—those which the White Paper suggests are so serious that only a custodia justified—are a move in the right direction.

As chairman of Crime Concern, I spe audiences about crime and criminality in soc the most warming developments in recent ye the universal recognition that longer sente necessarily lead to a reduction in crime. however, to follow the evidence that su sentences should be longer for violent offences that there is little or no evidence, however, to simply longer sentences do anything to resentment and the process of alienation t occurs when a prisoner is incarcerated for a

When all the arguments about the punishment have been stripped down and w through the elements of recrimination and s for catharsis, there remains one cardinal ele criminal disposals and punishments—the designed to ensure that those who offend d again. With that in mind, I greatly approve hon. and learned Friend's proposals. I believe a move in the right direction and, in many w overdue.

I warmly applaud the introduction of curfe the attendant electronic monitoring. That is e as it is clear that we need a greater menu disposals so that in appropriate cases—tho persons who should not necessarily be institution—people should be subject to re liberty that fall short of incarceration in an believe that there are many reasons why first almost every category should avoid being institution if possible. Such creative disposal powerfully demonstrate that the person subject to a special regime.

I have noted the argument that curfew attendant electronic monitoring somehow inf

liberties. I am one of the few Conservative Members to be an acknowledged supporter of the National Council for Civil Liberties. As the Conservative chairman of the Campaign for Freedom of Information, I first met my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary seven and a half years ago when we argued about the merits or demerits of the Data Protection Act 1984. We clashed on a number of occasions—to my personal cost ever since. With such credentials, spurious or otherwise, I see not one whit of evidence to suggest that electronic tagging and curfew orders in any sense infringe on civil liberties. I intervened earlier to cite the clear statement in paragraph 4.22 of the White Paper which states that it is only appropriate to use such a disposal when restrictions on liberty are justified by the offence. I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Minister of State would be the first to agree that it is vital that that precondition is attendant on every use of the curfew order. It should be an occasion on which some restriction on liberty is justified by the nature of the offence.

Mr. John Patten: I hope that the House is listening with great care to my hon. Friend. Among hon. Members on both sides of the House, my hon. Friend, above all people, has a considerable reputation as someone who believes in civil liberties. Did my hon. Friend spot the muddle that became apparent as Opposition Members contributed to the debate? It appears that they believe that electronic monitoring is a punishment. But the sentence of the court is the punishment. Electronic monitoring is a way to ensure, with deadly and complete accuracy, whether the punishment is adhered to. It is not a punishment in itself.

Mr. Norris: My right hon. Friend is right. Curfew orders and the attendant electronic tagging would be one of a creative menu of disposals which would follow a conviction for an offence. It is spurious to believe that that would have a peculiar impact on individual civil liberties —an impact which, apparently, a sentence of imprisonment does not have. That is ludicrous nonsense and, in all honesty, I do not believe that it is intellectually sustainable.

Mr. Sheerman: I am surprised at the hon. Gentleman. In many respects, a number of us admire some of the things he does, especially in the work of Crime Concern. The hon. Gentleman must be aware, however, that, within the range of informed opinion, that organisation stands alone in favour of electronic tagging. All other reputable groups are against it.

Crime Concern does a lot of good work in social crime prevention and the hon. Gentleman knows that if one is to understand such crime prevention one must understand the nature of the offender's family. One of the reasons why we oppose tagging is that it is a sentence on the family, not the individual. If one considers individual rights to include the rights of family members, one must accept that tagging will——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. This should be an intervention, not a speech.

Mr. Norris: Subject to your strictures, Madam Deputy Speaker, I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his remarks about Crime Concern. I have been asked by the director of Crime Concern to make it absolutely clear that, on this matter, I speak for myself. I am not speaking for the board of Crime Concern, which includes the hon. Gentleman's colleague, the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz), or for the directorate of that splend organisation with which I am privileged to continue association.

I hope to refer to other aspects of social cri prevention later, but I would be as opposed as the h Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman) to electro monitoring and curfew orders if I did not see them as alternative to custody. In particular, I believe that prospect of allowing people to live in their own hom infinitely preferable to the often inadequate conditions remand persons in prison. Those conditions acknowledged to be among the worst in our system, rat than the best. I believe that it is an immense advantage allow people to be remanded to their homes.

One is being short-sighted if one does not appreci that there can be alternatives to either liberty or custo that allow us to deal with those persons for whom restriction of liberty is an appropriate disposition wh prevents them from joining the university of crime. talking about social crime prevention the one thing t one must recognise about prison is that when you people go to prison for the first time they are taught h to avoid coming back a second time. They are not tau that that is achieved by not re-offending; rather, they taught to be a little bit cleverer the next time. T university of crime impact is immensely damaging to social fabric, and anything we can do in different ways deal with people who would otherwise have their freed restricted is desirable.

One must add a rider to such statements. Much been made of the technical efficiency or otherwise of tags that we employ at present. I spent some time in United States examining the issue of tagging, and I he no complaint about the technical quality of the equipme So it is probable that we shall be able to deve equipment which is serviceable and capable of withsta ing, so to speak, a little damage.

Mr. John Patten: My hon. Friend should go to Whips' Office.

Mr. Norris: I am told that the Whips' Office has versions on order, perhaps in the light of developme this evening.

I assure the hon. Member for Huddersfield that I wo not approve of the wholesale use of this type of appara until it had been well tried and tested. But it is feeble argue against the technology because there may have b a few technical failures in the first batch. While we must the technology right, it is generally agreed that not technology but the principle behind it is vital. The quest is whether it is an appropriate instrument to use, having listened with interest to the remarks of the h Member for Huddersfield, I believe that it is a useful pi of apparatus, particularly for first-time and yo offenders.

Mr. Sheerman: Unlike most interventions fr Conservative Members, this will be a short one. Is the h Gentleman happy that children will be tagged and hav go to school wearing such obvious devices?

Mr. Norris: I am happy to rely on the section in White Paper dealing with whether restrictions are justif which is the important precondition. I am not sure th schoolchild would be the subject of a monitoring dev But if the court decided that that was the desirable cou

[Mr. Norris]

if restrictions on an individual's liberty are justified, most people would prefer electronic monitoring to remand in custody or a period of imprisonment. I do not see anything exceptional about that. In the spirit of trying to keep youngsters, in particular, out of prison, alternatives to custody are greatly to be welcomed.

We kid ourselves if we do not recognise that there will be difficulties in implementing alternatives to custody. As the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook said, there is in the probation service a culture that is particularly appropriate to probation. Although probation officers are to be invited to be part of alternative community-based sentencing, I am not sure that that is an appropriate way to use the probation service.

Probation officers have a special and separate role which should be respected. The cultural divide between that role and the necessary regimes for some community-based alternatives to prison would be too great for them to jump. Equally, I do not relish the idea of members of the Prison Officers Association staffing the new schemes.

In the end, we shall probably have to create a separate, third force, perhaps formed of ex-service personnel and others who understand the discipline necessary to handle these issues. Not only will such people appreciate the need to make the new schemes truly effective, but the public will know that they are not providing a soft option. That new force will act in a sphere between the probation service and the Prison Officers Association.

Community acceptance is the vital concept. Up to now, too many magistrates, particularly lay magistrates, have refused to use community service orders because, to borrow a phrase from the Secretary of State, they have been seen as a slap on the wrist. The result is that such orders have never achieved the value that should have been attributed to them.

While all the new moves, not forgetting the proposals on parental responsibility, are to be welcomed, the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) spoke about the crucial part of the Bill and, to some extent, its crucial weakness, and the statistics sum it up. During 1990 about 20 million offences will be committed in Britain. About a fifth of those—over 4 million—will be recorded by the police. The other 16 million will not be recorded by them. About 95 per cent. of those crimes will concern property and over half of them will be committed by young men aged 21 or younger. A larger number of them will be opportunistic crimes and be highly preventable. A third of all those convicted of criminal offences will be aged under 17. The peak age of offending, particularly if we strip out the impact of young people being cautioned, is still about 15 for both sexes. The average age of burglars is nearer 15 than 20 and the offences are usually committed within a mile or so of their homes. Over a quarter of all auto crime is committed by youngsters in the 10 to 16 age range. In urban areas, one young man in three has come in contact with the police on a criminal matter before reaching his 17th birthday.

Everything in the Bill, welcome though it is, will not avoid that situation continuing. It will help, but we have a long way to go yet and the path ahead is clear. The hon. Member for Huddersfield referred to the work of Crime Concern. I pay tribute to the Home Secretary, to the Minister of State and to the present Foreign Secretary for their unswerving support for that splend which I am proud to chair but take none c credit for. That work is due entirely to N John Bright and the splendid team at Sv

They have developed some splendid with youngsters, preferably before they b The team has pointed the direction authorities, police forces and voluntary b the country can come to terms with communities. Only by dealing with th community level shall we come to terms v of criminality in society.

At present, we rely on considerable private sector to accompany the more tha from the Home Office. But it is gener context of the work that we have done Considering the cost of keeping people i less than £12,000 a year in any regime, and up to £30,000 for offenders in cl economic sense points to making a hu youngsters at an early age.

We have an opportunity to break thi cycle of criminality that begins virtually when the person concerned becomes a where a 15-year-old develops the attitud to become an offender, we must examine even before he can look over the dining ro speaking of attitudes learnt at home, in at play on street corners. The issue of ho how constructively they employ their ti are kept from getting into trouble and b statistic in the criminal justice system is

In a splendid speech to the Conservat Blackpool a couple of years ago, my righ Foreign Secretary drew a vivid analogy that grows straight and the tree that gro said that the determining factor in whet straight or crooked was how it was trea sapling. That analogy is as true now as do not recognise that we must bridg dealing with conviction and expensive c putting more of them into prevention, p prevention, all the evidence in the wor shall not crack the problem.

Mr. Beggs: Does the hon. Gentlema were to include the statistics of stolen ca vehicles in Northern Ireland, the figure w 1 million? Does he agree that whichever in power, they must continually press turers to ensure that, as far as possibl security in all motor vehicles?

Mr. Norris: The hon. Gentleman is draw attention to the problem of vehicle Ireland and the rest of the country. One p to make is that if we look at tables of cr how we compare internationally, we Britain, particularly England and W bottom of every league of crime. That is which we should say a great deal more. U fear of crime in our society is greater tha crime merits. Hon. Members on both s should be responsible enough to pron much as possible. As the hon. Gentlem irony is that auto crime breaks all t

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probably higher in Britain than in any other country except the United States. The auto industry must do something about that.

I have talked about Government involvement in funding youth crime prevention, but I also mentioned that my organisation receives a great deal of support from private enterprise. As corporate citizens, private enterprise can do a great deal to help prevent opportunistic crime. Some 90 per cent. of auto crime is purely opportunistic. Until now, security has not been a selling feature. It has been better to put go-faster stripes on the side of a car than to make sure that the car is fitted with proper locks. It is incredible that it is still derisorily easy to open a modern car and take it away. Perhaps there is more evidence of felonious intent thereafter in Northern Ireland than on the mainland of Britain, but in each country such theft often results in considerable damage and cost to the victim of that crime.

Mr. John Patten: I thank my hon. Friend for giving way to me a second time.

Does he agree that, notwithstanding the important points made by the hon. Member for Antrim, East (Mr. Beggs), in general terms, crime rates in Northern Ireland are considerably lower than those on the mainland when we set aside dreadful terrorist events? We should pay tribute to the population of the Province for what they have done to contribute to that and for the way in which they bring up their young people.

Mr. Norris: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for reminding the House of that. It is important to bear in mind that England and Wales are virtually bottom of all crime leagues and Scotland, identified separately, is at about the same level—occasionally below and occasionally above England and Wales. In Northern Ireland the position is much more complicated by the incidence of terrorist crime. In general, my right hon. Friend's observations are entirely correct. We must continue to reassure every section of the community. The constituents of the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook include elderly people who are made prisoners in their own homes entirely because of a fear of crime that is not justified by the crime rate around them. They are 14 times more likely to be the victims of road accidents than of muggings in any city centre in England and Wales.

I shall return to what was to have been the most platitudinous peroration on record in the House——

Mr. Barry Sheerman: Not by a long chalk; wait until 9.50 pm.

Mr. Norris: Perhaps it is not the most platitudinous. I, too, have listened to the odd speech of the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook.

We need constantly to remind ourselves that expense on detection, conviction and disposal is an admission of failure to have made enough young trees grow straight, of parental control, influence at school and social influence in the community on a young person's life. We can no longer continue to accept that failure. We must start doing something about it and the key to that is to invest more, both from the private sector and, at the risk of incurring the wrath of my right hon. Friend the Minister, the public sector. We must invest in youth crime prevention that is designed to reach the heart of criminality.

With that reservation, I extend a warm welcom
Bill, which seems to have begun a trend in the
management of criminality that has not been
many years. It is a considerable piece of work an
look forward to considering it in further detail d
passage through the House.

7.15 pm

Mrs. Llin Golding (Newcastle-under-Lyme):
raises many issues, and I intend tonight to deal o
that section involving children's evidence.

While the law refuses to listen to the evid
children in our courts, there can be no real justic
country. Many Members of this House and of t
place, strongly supported by many organisati
individuals, have argued and battled to enable c
voices to be heard in our legal system. In the p
years great strides have been made that ha
described as revolutionary in evidence law—no
time.

The Criminal Justice Act 1988 changed the
introduce the system of video links so that chil
longer had to appear in court in the presence of th
they were accusing, but could be cross-exam
another room, linked by a video camera. The
contains important changes in the law of corrobo
children's unsworn evidence that recognise that, b
nature, child sex abuse takes place mainly on a on
basis, most often out of sight of another adult.

I welcome the proposal in clause 42 which is
to abolish the competency requirement as it no
That will mean that children will be allowed
unsworn evidence. However, I reserve judgmen
wording of the clause until I hear the M
explanation of

"the power of the court in any criminal proce
determine that a particular person is not competen
evidence shall apply to children of tender years as it
other persons."

I am not certain that it has been recognised that
are different from adults and do not have t
capacity to understand words such as "duty to s
truth." I certainly believe that all children sh
listened to, regardless of their age or maturity.

Clause 43 allows the Director of Public Prosec
transfer cases, where sufficient evidence exists, di
the Crown court rather than going through a ma
court in the first instance, which is to be welc
principle. It would certainly reduce the time that c
to come to court.

Clause 45 will prevent the person accused of ch
from personally cross-examining the child, whi
surely be welcomed by everyone. Clause 44 allow
recording of an interview with the child to be
evidence, subject to the court's power to exclude
that is inadmissible or, in the interest of justice, s
excluded. All that is good news, for it should mak
to convict child molesters and, as has been
elsewhere, it could lead to the accused person c
after seeing the tape of the child's evidence. The
also mean that the child will not have to go thr
trauma of retelling the story of the alleged abu
months after the initial interview.

The Bill, however, seems to suggest th
recordings can be available as evidence only if th
available for cross-examination in court.

[Mrs. Llin Golding]

When other hon. Members and I first submitted amendments to change the law on the giving of evidence by children, during proceedings on the Criminal Justice Bills of 1987 and 1988, I was prepared to concede that in the interests of justice to the accused this was perhaps the only answer. I no longer think that it is. In 1988 the Home Secretary established an advisory group to consider the use of video evidence. It was chaired by Judge Thomas Pigot, and it reported in December 1989.

The report concluded that very young children ought never to be required to appear in public as witnesses in the Crown court. To overcome that, the report promised that once the prosecution was allowed to produce a video recording as evidence it should be allowed as of right to apply for the child witness to be examined and cross-examined at an out-of-court hearing which would itself be video recorded and later shown to the trial judge. I strongly support that suggestion. I understand that a similar procedure is widely used in America, where not only the video recording but also a transcript of the recording is presented to the jury. That seems very sensible.

Although I welcome the progress made in this Bill, I, together with many other people, much regret the fact that the Government have not seen fit to implement in full the Pigot report, for the reforms that it contained provided up-to-date justice in our courts. But there will be other days and other Criminal Justice Bills, and we will not go away until we are satisfied that children, regardless of their age, receive justice in our courts.

7.21 pm

Mrs. Ann Winterton (Congleton): I welcome the opportunity to speak briefly, in the sure and certain knowledge that the increase in crime is causing grave concern to my constituents and other people in this country. The Bill introduces a new and more suitable framework for dealing with offenders in the light of that concern. The maintenance of law and order and respect for the law of the land are part of my political philosophy, and they are given high priority in the policies of the Government.

The growth in crime rates is not restricted to Britain; I am aware that the same problems exist world wide. We have one of the lowest overall crime rates, and the lowest incidence of violent crime in western Europe. Our society is generally much less violent than those of north America and Australia. But knowledge of those facts is no consolation to the elderly pensioner who dare not venture out of his or her house after dark; or to the parents of young children who fear for their safety on the way to or from school, or to and from other activities; or to those whose homes have been broken into and whose personal possessions have been removed—some of them irreplaceable because of their sentimental value.

We are all much more aware of the incidence of crime because of instant communications in the media. Watching the distressed mother of an abducted child appealing for its return on television makes a much greater impression than reading about the event in the newspapers the following day.

What are the causes of the increased level of crime? The psychologists tell us that poverty causes crime, yet today we enjoy a standard of living higher than ever before in our history. We are told that lack of education causes crime, yet our education system has never been so open or funded so generously. Opposition Members may disagree, but when the Labour party was in office it could not fund these services to the degree that they are funded today.

Mr. Stuart Randall (Kingston upon Hull, West): I am sure that the hon. Lady appreciates that the gap between the rich and the poor has steadily widened under this Government and that that is a major factor which has contributed to the present high crime rates.

Mrs. Winterton: I hear the hon. Gentleman's point, but the social security system is working much better. The hon. Gentleman may have meant his point genuinely but I hope to show other areas in which society has gone wrong and failed our young people. I shall, for instance, point to the statistics given by my hon. Friend the Member for Epping Forest (Mr. Norris), who spoke about the crimes committed by young people.

Crime is caused by several factors deeply rooted in our society. First, it is caused by simple greed. It is also caused by a lack of discipline and of self-discipline and exacerbated by the breakdown of the traditional family unit. That breakdown has been encouraged by liberal elements to the detriment of society, and by the fact that the difference between right and wrong is not inculcated in our children at home or at school to the same extent that it once was. The churches have contributed to that glaring omission because they have failed to promote and provide a strong moral lead for the nation.

Crime prevention has been successfully tackled and promoted by the Government. In my constituency as elsewhere the neighbourhood watch schemes have been a great success. However, people must not relax; they must be eternally vigilant about reporting suspicious behaviour to the police.

There are more police now and they are better paid and better served, but even so more are needed to present a higher profile in public places, reassuring the public of their presence. Moves have been made to release police from administrative and desk duties by substituting them in those tasks by others. That has resulted in more police being available for duties more commensurate with their skills and training. That, too, is to be welcomed.

Several clauses deal with major criticisms from the public, who want the sentencing of offenders to reflect the seriousness of their crimes. They want violent and sexual offenders to have their past records taken into consideration when they are sentenced. They want such offenders to serve their sentences. In the past, when criminals have been let loose on an unsuspecting public far too early—in some cases they have re-offended with tragic results—it has made a mockery of our criminal justice system.

I welcome the moves to differentiate more distinctly between crimes against the person and those against property. We do not want our prisons cluttered with offenders on whom more suitable sentences could be imposed. It is vital that community orders, probation and curfew orders be seen not to be the soft option: they must be rigorously enforced. If any punishment is to succeed in its purpose, it must make the offender deeply regret the crime committed, and that process must take place before any rehabilitation can be instigated.

I welcome the prison building programme, but I fear, from what I have seen on television about the insides of our new prisons, that life inside may well be too cushy. I have never believed in degrading members of the human race by overcrowding and by the insanitary conditions endured in our older prisons, but nor do I consider that prisoners should exist under anything but the most rigorous regime.

I welcome the provisions to make parents more responsible for their children, and I hope that other Government Departments will follow suit in their policies on this matter. I think particularly of the Department of Health, which has in the past undermined parental responsibility for under-age girls who may be the victims of illegal sexual activity. Either parents are responsible for their children or they are not. The Government cannot have it both ways. If parents are unwilling or unable to exercise authority over their children—that happens—others must be brought in to do just that.

Parents will respond positively to the Bill's provisions. Cruelty, neglect and violence to children, including sexual offences, must be considered to be among the most serious of all. Video evidence is vital if there is to be any conviction for crimes against small children. The sooner the child can have its reactions recorded the better. The sooner the case can be brought before the courts the better. The child cannot begin to rebuild its life and security until those traumas are over. The Bill's provisions will assist considerably in convicting those guilty of such horrific crimes as the sexual abuse of children, with the addition of the appropriate safeguards mentioned by my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence).

There are some omissions from the Bill. Some crimes are so horrendous that civilised society has to to take what might be considered by some to be uncivilised action. The option of imposing the death penalty should be restored to the courts. In every vote on the subject since I was elected in 1983, I have voted in favour of the ultimate deterrent. I have not changed my mind. If there is an opportunity to do so, I shall remain consistent on that vital issue. My view is shared by millions of law-abiding citizens.

7.31 pm

Mr. Alun Michael (Cardiff, South and Penarth): I do not agree with the remarks of the hon. Member for Congleton (Mrs. Winterton) at the end of her speech. I invite her, the Home Secretary and the House to look at what works when we try to find solutions to crime.

I have some knowledge and experience of certain matters covered by the Bill. I refer in particular to my experience with young people. Like my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), I welcome the fact that there are positive elements in the Bill that will command the support of all parts of the House. We all want sentencing to be effective. We want to prevent crime. We want the courts to operate more effectively. What, however, do those words mean? The Government still have not grasped the ancient wisdom contained in such ancient saws as

"Prevention is better than cure",

or

"The devil makes work for idle hands",

or

"Don't spoil the ship for a ha'porth of tar".

The Home Secretary asked me earlier about the kind of world that I live in which has led me to my conclusions about the crime problem. For two decades I worked with juvenile offenders. I have worked among inner-city communities that have experienced the worst effects of crime. I was chairman of the juvenile bench in Cardiff. It is one of the largest juvenile benches in the country. For many years I was a member of a probation committee. I was the first chairman of the Wales intermediate treatment forum, which sought to bring together police, magistrates, social workers, schools, youth workers and others to tackle the problems that the Bill is meant to address. I lived in a world where the lives of young people were ruined because of their involvement in crime.

What sort of world, I wonder, does the Home Secretary live in? He made me wonder about that when he spoke earlier this evening. To judge by "Dod's Parliamentary Companion", it seems to be a world limited to court experience. What happens in court is important for the prevention of crime, but it is important only if it is relevant and addresses experience in the outside world. It is important only if it works when seeking to deal with crime prevention and crime punishment. Experience teaches us that legislation is not enough. The court system in this country does not need a quick fix. Prevention is not a cheap option. Commitment and care are needed. In making those comments, I echo some of the points made by the hon. Member for Epping Forest (Mr. Norris). The Government must provide the resources and encourage a partnership approach if crime prevention and crime are to be tackled properly.

When I asked the Home Secretary about prevention, he prayed in aid his support of the expansion of neighbourhood watch schemes. That is a sensible response to a problem in a local community, but it is no substitute for proper, well-structured and targeted work in a community, or for the lack of a police presence. The Home Secretary said that police numbers had increased, but the police are frustrated by the increased amount of paperwork and by not having the resources to do the job. The Home Secretary will be responsible for undermining police morale even further if he ignores that fact. He appeared to ignore it when he spoke earlier.

I agree with recent remarks made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Sparkbrook. He said that crime prevention does not strictly fall within the definition of criminal justice matters. That is a major problem. It could, and it should. My right hon. Friend said:

"in the minds of the general public, as in my own mind, we cannot divorce the way in which offenders are caught, treated and punished from the need to reduce the level of crime itself."

He commented on the crime epidemic that we are experiencing, but I agree with the hon. Member for Epping Forest who suggested that we should not overstate it. It is a comparative epidemic. I agree with his statistics.

The Home Secretary referred to chapter 9 of the White Paper on resources and costs. It does not refer, however, to prevention. Reference is made to resources to expand community penalties, but community penalties are under-resourced. Reference is made to £15,800 a year to keep an offender in custody, to the fact that the successful completion of 100 hours of community service costs less than £450 for each offender and to the fact that supervision under a probation order costs about £1,000 a year for each offender. The White Paper continues:

"the more intensive the supervision, the greater the cost."

That is right, but the greater the cost, as long as the money is well used, the greater the effectiveness. The less

[Mr. Alun Michael]

intensively that it is used the more likely is it that the community-based option will fail. Failure is inordinately expensive. The price of failure is the committal of further crimes and additional problems and burdens for our communities.

The Bill refers to additional resources for social inquiry reports. The cost is estimated at £2·5 million for the 11,250 reports that will have to be made. A request has been made for more information about the figures. We want to be sure that they have not been plucked out of the air.

A social inquiry report goes nowhere on its own. It must have a purpose and a target and must be made in the context of a court where creative actions are taken, particularly when young people come before it. The court atmosphere can be constructive. I know from my own experience that sentencing can be the result of a team approach when it is targeted at what will work for young people, thus avoiding the burden of additional crime as young people are tempted into further criminality. That does not necessarily happen. The Government are responsible for providing the resources and creating the context within which court experience can be positive, and not another negative experience for young people which is more likely to lead to an acceleration of their criminal careers.

The Bill ought to address probation, sentencing, punishment, the protection of the public and the diversion of young people from committing crimes. The Bill does not reflect any Government enthusiasm to make community-based options work effectively for the benefit of society as a whole. It contains references to curfew orders. Superficially, that is an attractive option. I can think of cases where curfew orders could be useful and effective, but most probation officers and others who work in the community with offenders regard measures such as curfew orders and electronic monitoring as misguided and unproductive. They believe that constructive measures are far more likely to divert offenders from committing further crimes. We ought to concentrate on measures that work, instead of getting hung up on electronic tagging. It is interesting to note that the courts appear to agree.

Curfew requirements have been available for juvenile offenders since 1983, but are hardly ever used. They are used only by the more creative sentencers in most particular circumstances. I hope that the Minister will ask why that is so. If we are to have this order, let us look at the expectations and the practice to be followed in its use. It appears that these are ideas devised by Ministers and lawyers. Such ideas do not necessarily work. They can play up to popular prejudice, but, in relation to juvenile crime in our society now, we need solutions that work. Above all, we need team work. There is mutual frustration among the police, magistrates, social workers, probation officers and others at working in a system which is so fragmented and which ultimately does not work. It needs the weight and authority of the Home Secretary and the Government to make a team approach work.

I was involved about 15 years ago in a project in South Glamorgan entitled "Working together for children and their families". The lessons learnt from that project are as valid today as they ever were. One thing that has not been done successfully is to create in each of our big towns and cities, particularly, the sort of teamwork necessary to combat crime. That will not be achieved simply by legislation. It must be achieved by placing resources in the right places.

I agree with the hon. Member for Epping Forest about the value of diverting young people away from ascending the ladder of crime into the universities of crime. In recent years, the most successful approaches to reducing juvenile crime have been constructive supervised activity schemes. Such schemes work to steer delinquents away from crime and—this is important in relation to the comments of the hon. Member for Congleton—to involve parents in taking more responsibility for their children's behaviour. It is not enough to say in law that parents should take responsibility for their children's behaviour. It is not enough to put it in an Act or for the Home Secretary to tell parents what to do. The atmosphere must be created in which parents are persuaded and enabled to take greater responsibility for their children. That approach has proved to be much more effective than punitive measures. We should concentrate on promoting positive approaches to working with delinquents and reinforcing parental responsibility, rather than relying on punitive measures which are fraught with problems and are likely to be counter-productive. I regret that the Government's approach smacks of the Prime Minister's approach, which is to tell everybody, whatever their professional knowledge and experience, how things should work, rather than recognising the reality of what happens in our community.

Resources must be used in that direction and I plead with the Government and Conservative Members to persuade the Home Secretary to do just that. There is a need for the resources referred to in the White Paper not just for probation but for several related agencies, because criminal justice is not an isolated activity. It takes place not on an island but in the society in which people live. The courts must relate to that society if they are to work effectively. For instance, there is an inverse correlation between the provision of youth service in a community and the amount of criminal activity. Therefore, it is sensible to ensure that our communities have good youth work provision. That is part of creating a healthy society and a healthy society is one in which crime is discouraged by the context in which people live.

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): Does my hon. Friend agree that early identification of potential offenders is equally important because in that way help can be provided at an early stage?

Mr. Michael: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for pinpointing precisely the point I wanted Ministers to hear today.

I worked in an inter-agency team in Cardiff for a number of years. We succeeded in identifying and working with youngsters before they got into trouble. We received a great deal of praise for our efforts. The annual report of the probation committee referred to the reduction in crime in that area. What happened? In the following year, probation resources were withdrawn because there were not as many young people offending. We had succeeded in doing what my hon. Friend the Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham) suggested. We identified potential offenders at an early stage and provided positive alternatives in the community to divert them from ever needing to become involved in the criminal system. My hon. Friend the Member for St. Helens, South is right and

I hope that Ministers will take that point on board. The probation service had to withdraw resources because fewer people were coming to court and the figures did not meet the requirements of the Government through the Home Office.

The Government now say that there are sufficient probation officers. That is in theory only. The Home Secretary said that sufficient support and the necessary resources will be provided to back up the Bill. The White Paper identified certain resources but did nothing to address the gaps in provision to which I and my hon. Friend the Member for St. Helens, South have referred. If the Home Secretary wants to provide the resources, for God's sake, let us ask him not to take an accountant's estimate or statistician's figure but to look at creative initiatives that have worked in the community and listen to those who have tried to make them work and take their advice on the resources and continuity required.

The Children Act 1989 referred to delay and pointed out that delay is prejudicial to the interests of a child. Will the Government take that on board in relation to young offenders? Anybody who has sat in a juvenile court for a considerable time will have seen a youngster who, when asked, "Did you plead guilty or not guilty?", says, "What is that?" When a description is given the youngster then says, "I don't know. I can't remember because it's so long ago." It is impossible to tackle the root of criminal activity if the case comes before the court so long after the event that the youngster, never mind the police and witnesses, has forgotten the activities that led to the court appearance. There is no mention in the Bill of the prejudicial nature of delay to young children. Will the Minister take that on board and consider an amendment in Committee to emphasise, for all those concerned with the criminal justice system, that delay is prejudicial to the young offender, the victim and potential victims if the offender continues a career in crime?

An academic who looked at the terms of the Bill identified the danger of an increase in the time taken as a result of the provisions in the Bill. Some of the measures that I regard as positive might contribute to that sort of delay and that would be a tragedy. Will the Minister consider that? I ask him please to consider repeating in relation to juvenile offenders the strictures of the Children Act 1989.

On contracting out, my experience in juvenile courts of replacing the police with the Crown prosecution service was a disaster. It removed one or two police officers who were regularly in the juvenile court. They understood young people and acted as a means of communication between those young people and their families and the police officers who had to bring cases before the court. They made a tremendous contribution to juvenile justice in Cardiff. The loss of those police officers from the court affected not just the presentation of the case but the whole well-being, efficiency and effectiveness of the court system. The policemen's presence and ability to anticipate problems and aid the smooth running of the courts was invaluable.

Has the Home Secretary or Minister of State been involved in escort duty or with some of the young people and adults of whom we are talking? I regret that within the Government there is a mistrust of professionals. Police and prison officers should be enabled to do a proper job and work with the system to use their professionalism and training to the best advantage. I regret that in recent years —this is why the Home Secretary's answer on numbers of police officers was unhelpful—the grain of the Government's changes has been to stand in the way of the effective use of the professionalism of police officers and prison officers.

Will prisoners be given a choice of private institutions? Presumably, a competitive regime is being proposed. Will they have the same ability as patients within hospital trusts to use competition and to wander the country with money following them in search of the right institution? The purpose of this nonsensical idea is to diminish the status of the service and, like the options for the health service, should be thrown out quickly.

The number of people on remand awaiting sentence undermines the remedial work of prisons, which become places of containment. The message that I have received from prison officers and from their representatives is that they want to do a proper job and to be involved in remedial work, but the present situation in prisons does not allow that.

Then there is the remanding of young people in prisons. The incident at Armley was mentioned earlier and there was an incident at Swansea as well. I hope that the Minister and the Woolf inquiry will carefully consider the evidence of the all-party panel on penal affairs, which includes several people with considerable judicial and judicious experience, because a number of members of the other place take part in its discussions. Its representations are related to both issues, as is the overall approach to tackling and preventing crime in our communities. If only the Government would tackle the entry point to a criminal career among children and young people, and if only they would prevent youngsters from moving up the ladder of a criminal career, many of our problems would become manageable, our prisons and institutions would become manageable and people could use their professional experience positively.

There is an inconsistency in the Bill about the admissibility of evidence from young people. A youngster under 14 does not need to be sworn. The Bill, therefore, acknowledges the special circumstances of young people in court, but it brings the 17-year-old and the 10-year-old together in court. Why is a child aged between 10 and 14 not a child when he is involved in a criminal case? I suggest most strongly that the separation of age groups should be made compulsory. Mixing youngsters who perhaps are charged for the first time with trivial offences and those who have offended repeatedly is bad practice. I ask the Minister to take that point on board and perhaps to accept an amendment to the Bill.

Mr. John Patten: I know that the hon. Gentleman speaks with the authority of someone who sits on the bench as a justice of the peace. I am listening with care to him and apologise for not being present earlier, but I was eating a Mars bar preparatory to my reply to the debate. I followed with care the hon. Gentleman's point about the age range of 10 to 17. The Bill provides for a youth court to deal with those aged between 16 and 17. That will cause a separation between the juvenile court and the youth court, but I wonder how his interesting idea, which I am following with care and on which I have an open mind, would impact on the new division of ages that is introduced by the Bill.

Mr. Michael: I am grateful for the Minister's response. Other methods of separation would be beneficial to how age groups are treated within the court programming system. It is a point of detail, but the Minister has shown that he is open minded and I hope that there will be an opportunity to examine these matters further. I understand that my general point is supported by the Magistrates Association.

Mr. Bermingham: Does my hon. Friend agree that we must consider not only physical age but mental age? Someone who is 16 may have a mental age of 11. To lump him with someone who has a mental age of 16 can lead to injustice and unfairness.

Mr. Michael: I accept what my hon. Friend says. We must differentiate between criminal sophistication, because there are unsophisticated and very sophisticated 12-year-olds. That cannot be dealt with by simple rules, but only if the court structure is sensitive to such matters. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for pointing out those nuances and I hope that they will be considered seriously in Committee.

The encouragement of parental responsibility is a matter about which we are all concerned, because the method that is chosen is important. I ask the Minister to consider some of the comments that have been made on the White Paper by the Magistrates Association and others who are equally concerned that parental responsibility should be encouraged. I ask him to consider the dangers of introducing methods that place strictures on parents, that have harmful effects and that hasten the breakdown of family relationships. Parents may feel that they are being punished twice for their child's one offence. We must be careful to introduce not measures that pander to easy emotions on parental responsibility but ones that work and help. Again, I feel that I am echoing the comments of the hon. Member for Epping Forest.

My experience is that most children and young people do not need to be involved in crime. We can do much to improve the society in which they live, their training, their job opportunities and their image of themselves. Crime will not be ended by those measures, but it will be brought within manageable limits. That should be our first target, so that the group of individuals who in any society will be involved in crime is kept to a minimum and so that resources are targeted on those who need them and who need treatment.

I was pleased to hear the remarks of the hon. Member for Epping Forest on the differential in the sentencing of ethnic minorities. There is an allied need for constructive work in the community to identify problems and to try to anticipate them, not just in relation to sentencing. Positive, imaginative and preventive schemes in the community can cut crime drastically. Those schemes often depend on the high personal commitment of volunteers and professionals, who have been referred to in the professional circles as "the charismatic nuts". They can operate only for as long as they can keep up the momentum. Long-term success needs resources and long-term planning and teamwork in the community to ensure that the lessons of projects are learned, carried into the court structure and made univerally available where they are needed.

The Government have signally failed on that point and I appeal to the Minister and the Home Secretary to amend the provisions of the Bill that are weak or not justified by the facts and to complement its positive measures by providing resources for youth and community activity and for the preventive work of the probation service and community services to stop youngsters getting involved in crime. I ask them to ensure long-term success by providing those resources and long-term planning and team work in the community.

The Government have paid much lip service to the prevention of crime. In some of his responses, the Minister of State has shown a personal interest in making schemes work, but they cannot be seen as a cheap option and I appeal to the Home Secretary, who has not shown the same sympathy as the Minister, not to repeat mistakes but to make use of the professionalism, experience and evidence that is available on what preventive work can achieve and to build that into the Bill and into the measures that will accompany it when it is implemented.

7.58 pm

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): I listened with great interest to the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael). The House has great respect for his knowledge of work with young people. I was particularly impressed by his argument about withdrawing police from courts because of the introduction of the Crown prosecution service, and I agree with him. I believe that many Conservative Members agree with his comments about the importance of getting community service right in terms of how it affects young people.

I part company with the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth on parental responsibility. The hon. Gentleman goes half way but, like the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley)—who made some rather churlish comments about the entire Bill—he seems incapable of accepting parental responsibility as part of statute. Day after day, many people approach Members of Parliament and keep ramming that message home. Those of us with teenage children know the difficulties of exercising parental control. It is not an easy job, but that does not mean that it is open to any of us to abrogate responsibility and to say, "Let someone else carry on." But that message has come to us repeatedly from the Opposition.

Of course, we must make the right provision for young people. Of course, that must be part of a package of measures. If we ask young people to take part in community service, of course that service must be properly introduced, staffed and structured. But the bottom line is that parents must be required to take some responsibility for their children. That responsibility has broken down and, in part, has led to the increase in juvenile crime.

I should like to give an immediate and broad welcome to the thrust of the Bill. Unlike the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook, I believe that it is imaginative and far-sighted. It will take us another step forward in the sequence of Criminal Justice Bills that the Government have introduced.

Mr. Stuart Randall (Kingston upon Hull, West): The Opposition are not saying that parents should not take an interest in their children. We are concerned about the fact that some proposals in the Bill will fine parents for some of the misdemeanours in which their children take part. We believe that that could drive a wedge between young people and their parents and that it is not conducive to building the relationships that can alleviate crime.

Mr. Gale: The hon. Gentleman says only what so many Opposition Members said repeatedly for the greater part of the debate. I listened carefully to them. It is clear that they are prepared to will the end but not the means. In other words, as on so many other issues, they do not have the bottle for the job. I am not saying that every word in the Bill as drafted is perfect. I have served on the Standing Committees on two Criminal Justice Bills, and I hope to serve on the third. We revised those Bills in Committee. Of course, we shall look at every dot and comma and try to ensure that we have got this Bill right. There must be a fundamental commitment to the principle that parents must take responsibility. There is nothing wrong with enshrining that in law.

Our constituents will be extremely heartened by the balance that the Bill strikes between the crime and the punishment. We repeatedly hear from constituents how strongly they feel about the lack of appropriate punishment for violent offenders and sexual offenders. We repeatedly hear complaints about the fact that first-time offenders are sometimes given custodial sentences. My hon. Friend the Member for Congleton (Mrs. Winterton) said that prisons were cluttered with those on whom a more appropriate sentence could be imposed, and I could not agree more.

There is a general impression that prisons are universities of crime. There is a strong impression—this is another message that came across in the debate—that there are many people in prison who should not be there. Also, our constituents resent the fact that their taxes pay to keep in prison people who should be paying their debt to the community in the community.

It is nonsense to break up a home, send a man or woman to prison, support the family through every kind of benefit and impose on it the social stigma and social damage caused by removing a parent. The offender could and should much more properly serve his or her sentence and pay his or her debt to the community in the community in a way that is useful not only to the community but to the individual while maintaining the family unit. The Bill aims to draw that necessary distinction between crimes for which custodial sentences are appropriate and essential for the protection of the public, and crimes for which custodial sentences are not appropriate, except in extremis.

It is important that service to the community is constructive and not mindless. If we are to go down that road, it is vital that we make proper provision for the service that will benefit the community and the individual. Just digging ditches and filling them in is not the answer to anyone's problems. There are many jobs that can and should be done by people paying their debt to society.

I listened with interest to references to privatisation of escort work and remand prisons. I was saddened by the response by the Opposition and some of my colleagues, particularly my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby). I understand the concern of the police, but surely every hon. Member believes that highly trained, experienced, efficient police officers should use their time to the best advantage to do police work. We no longer ask the police to do most point duty. We do not ask them to act as traffic wardens, except rarely, so I cannot understand why it is necessary to ask a highly trained policeman or policewoman to escort remand prisoners travelling on a bus between a remand prison and court.

I cannot understand why the Opposition seem unwilling to learn the lessons that have been learned in the United States and to try privatisation of remand prisons. The authorities in the United States have gone much further down that road and have privatised penitentiaries. That works well. My hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge says that it is vital that the security staff who are employed are properly trained. We clearly need to give attention to that. To use the Opposition's words, we do not want any cowboys doing the job, but there is no reason why a cowboy firm should do the job, unless we let it.

Mr. Sheerman: At the Labour party conference, the senior director of the Group 4 company—which, I believe, is one of the most reputable security operations—told me about what he called a cowboy firm guarding submarine installations in Scotland and paying men £1 an hour. When will the Government do something about that system? If it can happen guarding submarines in a highly sensitive defence area, it can happen with the privatisation of remand services.

Mr. Gale: I appreciate the fact that much of the hon. Gentleman 's observation, like much of his policy, is based on guesswork and hearsay. Conservative Members try to go into matters more deeply and seriously. I am prepared to believe that there are private security firms that are not up to scratch, just as there are parts of the public service that, on occasions, are not up to scratch. That is no reason not to use some imagination and not to allow those who could do the job efficiently to do so and save the time of trained policemen and policewomen.

In looking at private remand prisons, are we prepared to consider the reintroduction of what was called the bridewell, the remand prison with the court room attached? It has been suggested that in inner cities that could be especially appropriate. It has been suggested that when we are considering new buildings—and it has been suggested that some high-rise blocks might be eminently suitable as remand prisons—it should be possible to build the court room into the same establishment, which would minimise travelling and, therefore, the amount of escort duty necessary. I hope that my right hon. Friend can comment on that in his winding-up speech or that he will say that we may be able to examine that idea during the Bill's progress.

I have studied with great interest the provisions dealing with probation and with release on licence. Clearly, those provisions will be the subject of debate in Committee. At this stage, I want to say to my right hon. Friend only that he may wish to comment on the extension of sentences and on the reduction of parole when prisoners behave badly or cause disturbances in prisons. The Bill seems to lay considerable emphasis on the terms of release on probation from prison, but it does not refer to sanctions that may be taken against prisoners who cause disturbances while in gaol. We have seen recently how dangerous such disturbances can be and how they can affect the welfare and lives not only of prison officers, but of other prisoners. The Bill provides an opportunity for us to address ourselves to the subject of disturbances in prisons.

Several hon. Members who are members of the Select Committee on Home Affairs are absent today because they are taking evidence on football hooliganism. It would be wrong for me, as a member of that Committee, to

[Mr. Gale]

pre-empt its findings. However, I have been asked to make a couple of points that arise from the evidence that we have taken already. The Bill contains several new offences that may prove extremely appropriate in dealing with those who cause trouble inside and outside football grounds. The police who gave evidence last week to the Committee made the point clearly that the powers to search fans outside and, especially, inside grounds are woefully inadequate. We heard an appalling story from one police officer about a fan who, when arrested inside the ground, was found to have about his person a plastic rocket launcher which was designed to hurl missiles to the other end of the pitch and to explode among the spectators there. It is clear already that the provision that allows the police and others who are exercising crowd control inside football grounds powers of search is inadequate for them to do the job that they are required to do.

The police also suggested that their powers and those of the security teams who are used at football grounds are inadequate for the control of pitch invasions. It is often said that the police do not do enough to control crowds on the football pitch, but in view of the presence on the pitch of thousands of fans, it is abundantly clear that no amount of effort by the police or by the security teams will be sufficient to identify more than a few of the miscreants so that they can be brought to trial. I know that the Select Committee will want to make recommendations on that. I hope and believe that the Select Committee's report on policing football stadiums and on football hooliganism generally will be published while the Bill is in Committee and I hope that my right hon. Friend will be able to respond to some of the recommendations and, if necessary, to take appropriate action to legislate on them during the passage of the Bill so that time will be saved and the measures will be implemented as swiftly as possible.

I want to refer to issues facing the magistrates courts. Most of them are not referred to in the Bill, so a Second Reading debate may not be an appropriate stage at which to discuss them. However, this debate provides an opportunity to place on record some of the concerns felt by magistrates and by court officers such as about the sentencing of uninsured drivers. Formerly, those who drove uninsured were liable to a prison sentence, but that offence was then removed from the list of imprisonable offences because it was felt that simply not having insurance was not a sufficient reason for someone to be sent to prison—and, broadly speaking, I concur.

However, there is a strong feeling from the magistrates' benches that in removing the liability of going to prison from those who drive without insurance, several knock-on effects have been created. It is suggested that if uninsured driving was reinstated as an imprisonable offence, it would be possible for magistrates to award prison sentences in extreme cases and, in most cases, to impose community service, which they cannot now impose on the uninsured driver. My right hon. Friend may consider that the matter can be more properly considered when we discuss the Bill on road transport and if he cares to tell me that when he——

Mr. John Patten *indicated assent.*

Mr. Gale: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend. Perhaps he will either make representations or encourage me to make representations to my right hon. Fr Secretary of State for Transport, so that the matte addressed in the Bill on road transport. It is clear sentencing provision available to magistrates f sured drivers is inadequate at present.

Earlier in the debate, we heard much about re bail, especially as it applies to members of the community, and that is also a source of cor magistrates' benches, although I do not wish to go the arguments again. At present, the justification f and bail, as my hon. and learned Friend the Mer Burton (Mr. Lawrence) said earlier, is based likelihood to leave—in other words, whether the a likely to appear before the court. The court fi extremely restrictive and the benches have sugge bail could be used in a wider range of ca circumstances, and imposed using criteria oth simply whether the accused is likely to reappear b court. It is also suggested that the bail imposed worth more than the fine that would be imposed, accused absconds, the court at least gets its mon

There is concern about the powers of the ma courts to commit people to the Crown court for s It is felt that if the magistrates courts had a gener to commit for sentence to a Crown court wh matters were already under consideration be Crown court, those cases and sentences could taken together in the Crown court, which would the need for sentences to be imposed in the Cro and for further matters then to go back to the ma court for final sentence. That would simply cut middle man——

Mr. Sheerman: Just get on with it.

Mr. Gale: The hon. Member for St. Helens, So Bermingham) makes some disparaging remark. I way to him so that he can say it again.

Mr. Bermingham: I did not say anything to Gentleman, who should have an eye test. Has he section 41 of the Criminal Justice Act 1988, wh power to the higher court to deal with the lower minor matters?

Mr. Gale: The magistrates' clerks feel that thei are not general enough for them to be able to re for total sentencing from the magistrates courts instigation rather than at the instigation of th court. I know that the hon. Member for St. Hele spends far more time in court than I am likely o do. I am merely seeking to relay to the House th of those at the sharp end who do another part o that the hon. Gentleman seeks to do. I know tha has a view of those matters, but so has the benc have magistrates' clerks. It is right that the Hous hear and pay attention to some of those views. there are occasions when we do not listen enough who are at the sharp end.

Another area of concern is the non-produ prisoners before courts. The bench feels that there for guidance. It is felt by many of those who s bench that there is a need for an explicit provisi Bill to cover what courts should do when prisone produced before magistrates courts. That tak particular relevance if we are to move tow privatisation of remand prisons. It is clear

responsibilities of those running such establishments will have to be defined. We need to define how the courts are expected to react when the prisoners whom they anticipated dealing with are not produced before them.

Capital punishment has been raised yet again in the debate. My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton said earlier that he intended to table an amendment to the Bill with a view to reintroducing the penalty of capital punishment as the maximum available sentence for murder. My hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway), who is a member of the Select Committee on Home Affairs and who is taking evidence at the moment, has told me that it is his intention to table such an amendment.

Like my hon. Friend the Member for Congleton, I have voted in favour of the reintroduction of capital punishment on every occasion when the House has debated the issue since I have been a Member of this place. I believe that capital punishment is a deterrent to murder. I believe also that the incidence of armed crime has risen since the abolition of capital punishment. That continues to place the men and women of the police force in an intolerably dangerous position. I hope and believe that the House will have a further opportunity to debate an issue that has the overwhelming support of the general public when we come to consider the Bill on Report. I shall support an amendment that seeks to reintroduce capital punishment.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. Unless more restraint is shown by hon. Members in the length of their speeches, other hon. Members will be disappointed by not being able to contribute to the debate.

8.23 pm

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones (Ynys Môn): I understand your stricture, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I hope that those who wish still to contribute to the debate will bear it in mind. There have been some fairly long contributions and perhaps they have prevented some of us who have been in our places since the beginning of the debate from developing some of the arguments that we wished to advance on Second Reading.

As a Member who has been a member of a Committee that considered a former Criminal Justice Bill, and as someone who has considered our approach to criminal justice legislation over the past 10 years, I am rather like the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer) in being circumspect in approaching a fresh Criminal Justice Bill. The main provisions of such a Bill are loudly trumpeted, well trailed and held before the House as the Government's final answer to rising crime rates.

It is claimed that the best way to stop criminals from profiting from their illegal activities is to support the provisions in the latest Criminal Justice Bill. The crime figures tell us, however, that crime has increased at a faster rate under this Government than at any time since the second world war. I refer to the seemingly endless increase in serious crime. The number of offences of violence against the person has doubled since 1979. There were 94,960 such offences reported in 1979, and 180,000 were reported in the year ending June 1990. The figure for 1990 was a 7 per cent. increase on the figure for the previous year. These are startling statistics when we have a Government who were elected on a law and order ticket.

Before dealing with the main provisions of the Bill, I wish to stress yet again the need for a new approach in dealing with crimes of violence. Over the years, as a practitioner in the criminal courts, it has sickened me to see the inconsistency of approach between crimes involving violence and crimes related to property. Motoring offences sometimes attract more serious sentences than those that are given for crimes of violence, and that worries me. I have never understood why theft or burglary should be considered more abhorrent than violence. Of course, theft and forcible entry of a dwelling must be adequately punished, but striking a person in anger, especially a child or a woman, is a hideous offence. It is an attack on a person's dignity. It is the intrusion of a person's privacy, and to that extent it is destructive. Our entire approach to sentencing should recognise that. To the extent that it is recognised in the Bill, it is welcome and long overdue.

There are other matters set out in the Bill that are welcome, and we have heard about them today. I have in mind the new sentencing framework, the proposal for unit fines and the abolition of sentences of detention for 14-year-old boys. There is a number of omissions, however, that should be highlighted, and we need to strengthen some of the proposals in the Bill.

We lack consistency in our approach to sentencing and the provisions in part I may well fall short of producing the consistency in sentencing that would give our criminal justice system greater credibility and authority. We have heard about the recent survey which showed that there were considerable variations in sentencing between courts. The average use of custody at Wood Green Crown court, for example, was 38 per cent., whereas it was 69 per cent. at Mold Crown court in Clwyd. In Powys, 6 per cent. of adults received custodial sentences for theft, yet 17 per cent. did so in Cheshire. At Gloucester, 29 per cent. of those sentenced for burglary received custodial sentences, while 54 per cent. did so in north Wales. That level of inconsistency is indefensible. The public do not understand why they are more likely to receive a custodial sentence in one part of the country than in another.

I have some reservations about the concept of a sentencing council. We should be able to avoid getting ourselves into the position of having to set one up. Unfortunately, however, the Government do not have sentencing policy right in the context of the Bill, and we may be driven to consider setting up such a council unless we achieve a consistency which gives greater credibility and authority to the criminal justice system.

One of the main omissions from the Bill is a coherent strategy for reducing the remand population. I introduced a Bill in 1988 which was aimed at achieving a consistent approach. Again, I commend the contents of the Bill to the House. Remand prisoner figures are staggering. In March, the remand population in England and Wales was 10,194, or 20 per cent. of the entire prison population. The proportion of remand prisoners to prisoners generally has more than doubled in the past 13 years. Remand prisoners are also often held in the worst conditions. All hon. Members should be worried about the fact that nearly 60 per cent. of self-inflicted deaths in prisons occur on remand. Prisoners are three times more likely to take their own lives than the rest of the population. However, if we

[Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones]

consider the remarkable statistics about remand prisoners, it is clear that only 36 per cent. of female and 52 per cent. of male prisoners who are remanded in custody eventually receive a custodial sentence.

I welcome the acknowledgement that for most crimes punishment in the community is not only likely to be in the public interest, but would also increase the prospect of victims receiving compensation. That is a welcome development. It is important that the criminal justice system accepts the need to compensate the victim. If we can achieve that by ensuring that more people receive sentences in the community to do community work, that would help to create the proper system.

Conservative Members have spoken about the benefits of electronic tagging. However, I do not believe that the case has been made for tagging. I listened with great care to what has been said, but I am inherently against tagging. There have been only a few minor pilot schemes and I believe that there should be more of them before we enshrine the principle in legislation. It is dangerous to introduce the principle in primary legislation.

I am also worried about the extended powers to bind over parents of young offenders. I understand that we must make parents more responsible for the activities of children; that is a very strong point. However, my experience, and the experience in the courts generally, has shown that where current powers to make parents more responsible for the offences of their children are used, it can involve friction in families. We must strike a balance between the need to make parents responsible for the offences of their children and the need to bind families together instead of breaking them up and creating friction. The Government have not made a proper case in that respect in the Bill.

I am also worried about the privatisation of prisoner escort services and particularly for remand prisons. I have an inherent objection to that proposal. It is abhorrent that money can be made from the administration of criminal justice.

The Bill has some good parts and it contains some useful provisions. However, I believe that it has some completely unnecessary gimmicks and some glaring omissions which should be considered. I stress again that my main objection to the Bill is that it contains no coherent strategy for reducing the remand population. I recognise that that would entail the use of greater resources, but it is wrong that people who are mentally ill or suffer from drug or alcohol abuse should be kept in prison. Other provision should be made for them.

It was remarkable that, when the Home Secretary responded to a point about the code of guidance or memorandum, he could not tell us what other provisions there were for those people. He said that we should consider other provisions and ways of dealing with them, but he could not tell us how or where. When the Minister replies, I hope that he will tell us where those people are to be kept, because greater resources are involved. Until we have a coherent strategy for reducing significantly the remand population, we shall not have a proper approach to the criminal justice system.

8.34 pm

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Re
welcome this opportunity to speak and I regre
that Conservative Members have said once again
want to see the restoration of capital punishm
House has decided that issue decisively on thre
occasions over recent years. I believe that only
pieces of new evidence that should concentrate o
have come to light since the previous debate. The
acceptance that the Guildford Four were innocen
acceptance by most people that the Birming
should be released. Those are clear reminders t
can be miscarriages of justice and that the death
final and makes it impossible to provide recom
such miscarriages.

The Bill addresses a new situation in that we a
a lame duck Parliament with a lame duck Prime
who can clearly restore her credibility in the cou
overseas only if she opts for a general elect
likelihood is that during the passage of the Bill we
a general election sprung on us. We shall then h
my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Labour pa
Bench new legislation of a very different nature o
get some of the non-controversial parts of this Bi
in the last few days before a general election. I
the Minister will try to get consensus from the Bi
of confrontation.

The major issue at the general election will be
society which has been created over the past 1
believe that it is odd that, having achieved a
demographic change in the number of young peo
age group likely to commit crime, we have not s
in the general crime statistics, although I welcom
that crimes among juveniles appear to be declini
with demographic changes.

I measure the Bill against the effect that it wil
my constituents. They still suffer a great deal fr
crime, much of which is committed by their ne
and their greatest regret is that the Bill contains
measures to prevent crime. There is nothing abo
prevention. I hope that, as the Bill proce
Government will bring forward measures to preve

In August the Minister of State tried to justify
increase in the crime figures and he said that i
public's fault because they did not deter opportun
I accept that some members of the public could ta
more care of their property and could try to d
some opportunist crime. However, in my constitu
much of the crime arises from people trying to e
sums of money to pay for drugs and from
neither of which leads to opportunist crimes.

If the Government want to stop opportunist cr
should make more efforts in certain are
Government have suggested, with regard to cre
that people should have a discount for cash.
should cast their minds back 10 or 15 years wh
the most common crimes involved armed bandit
up petrol stations. That crime virtually dis
because petrol companies improved security
stations and the majority of people began to pay
petrol by credit card. The amount of money avail
stolen in petrol stations late at night di
dramatically. If the Government want to d
criminals going after money and using violer
should be encouraging credit cards, not disc

them. I realise that credit cards increase fraud, but if we must choose between the two, I should prefer fraud to violent crimes involving people trying to take money.

The Government should also consider how the poll tax affects matters such as street lighting. It is clear that many local authorities have identified relatively cheap schemes to improve street lighting and make property more secure, but those schemes still cost money. It is extremely difficult for those authorities to get the money. Until recently, tower blocks in Brinnington in my constituency had fairly high levels of crime. The local authority put in surveillance systems—entry is gained only after identifying oneself—put in new door frames and carried out various other measures dramatically to improve the security of those tower blocks. The effect has been tremendously good for the people who live in the tower blocks. The only problem is that such improvements are expensive. If the Government want to prevent crime and, in the end, save money, they should make it easier for housing authorities to take those measures. We have already discussed the failure of car manufacturers to make motor vehicles secure.

The last point on crime prevention is that we should do much more to encourage the youth service—again, one of the services that are squeezed by the working of the poll tax or the community charge. The youth service is one way to avoid boredom.

There should be much more in this legislation about restitution to some of our constituents who lose out as a result of crime and then find that they get very small sums in compensation.

In the debate on the Queen's Speech I pressed the Home Secretary about what he will do about the disgraceful situation in Greater Manchester. He knows that there are far too many remand prisoners at the moment in police cells in the Greater Manchester area. We understand the problems that occurred at Strangeways, but it is ridiculous that a police station such as Stockport has inadequate cells and that those cells are cluttered up with remand prisoners.

I should have thought that the Home Secretary could use the problems of Manchester dramatically to cut the time that people on remand remain in prison or, in Greater Manchester, remain in police cells. All he does is say that it is the prison warders' responsibility. He is the Minister in charge. He should find some way of negotiating so that we could get remand prisoners out of police cells in Greater Manchester.

Also, the Home Secretary has to accept at least 112 days as a firm legal requirement in which to get people into court rather than to allow the conspiracy which seems so often to occur between the various people involved and which allows remand cases to run on and on.

There are many other points that I should like to make. No doubt I will have an opportunity to make some in Committee. However, we should look at prisoners' rights. I have made that point on many occasions. It is easy to give rights to people of whom we approve, but it is difficult to give rights to people of whom we disapprove. We should consider giving far more rights to prisoners. When a prisoner asked me whether he could have a copy of the prison rules, I sent him a copy, but he was denied access to most of them. He was told that they were not available to prisoners. I realise that there are difficulties with barrack room lawyers in prisons, but prisoners should be able to see the rules and have a clear understanding of them.

Parental responsibility has been pressed by Conservative Members. Parents should be much more responsible. It distresses me when I find my constituent encouraging their youngsters to go out on to street corner at night because they perhaps make too much noise in the house and the parents are pleased to see them go out. They do not ask questions about what they do. Young people sit around on street corners, annoy other people and, through boredom, get into crime. I should like more of my constituents to take a responsible attitude to their children but we must be careful about demanding too much through the courts.

It is quite clear that many young people who appear before the courts do not have parents who are in a position to be supportive. They are looked after by, perhaps, a grandparent or a parent who is already struggling to have any control over them. It would be unsatisfactory to cause extra hassle for the person who is giving some support.

I hope that the Committee stage will be constructive and that, even if we have an early general election, we will be able to get something out of the Bill by the time the election comes.

8.43 pm

Mr. Terry Dicks (Hayes and Harlington): Some of the things that I am about to say will not please the bleeding hearts, the do-gooders or the officials at the Home Office who seem to have a great influence—perhaps too great an influence—on the criminal justice legislation. I welcome the Bill in general terms because it takes us a stage further in dealing with crime and criminals.

I draw the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary to my intervention in his speech, which I think he handled in a rather flippant way. I asked about concurrent sentencing, and he made the point that if people commit two crimes and time was added on instead of the sentence running concurrently, they would be in prison for a very long time. People outside the House do not care at all about that. If someone commits a crime for which he goes to prison for five years, and has committed that crime five times in an evening, why should he serve the same amount of time as someone who has committed the crime only once? That seems illogical and unfair, and it does not reflect people's views.

Before Opposition Members smile, let me say that my views represent those of ordinary working class people in my constituency. You can bet your sweet life that they also represent the views of your constituents but which you are too scared to put forward.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must not drag me into these matters.

Mr. Dicks: I beg your pardon, Mr. Deputy Speaker. With great respect, I should have said the constituents of Opposition Members.

The Bill mentions early release time. Why on earth should we have early release time? A sentence should be a sentence. If people do not behave in prison, we should add time on for bad behaviour, not take time off for good behaviour. There should be no question about it; if they are in prison, they are there to be punished, and that should be the beginning, the middle and the end of it.

Capital punishment has been mentioned. Of course we should have capital punishment. It is the only way to deter murder and it is the only way in which we can get our

[Mr. Dicks]

hands on and get rid of the terrorists in our midst. People say, "You can make one mistake and wrongly execute somebody." There are about 50 people walking free now who murdered once, served their time, were released, and then murdered a second time. For every person in respect of whom a mistake has been made, 50 people have been murdered who would not have been murdered had those who had committed the crime been executed the first time round. We must bear that in mind when we hear the wailing, whining and whingeing of those who say that capital punishment is not right in a civilised society. How can that be said when our society is not civilised because of the way in which terrorists behave in the streets of this country?

The Bill does not mention corporal punishment. The thug, the football thug and the lager thug know no other vision of life apart from violence. People would like to see dished out to those people the sort of violence and attacks that they dish out to decent people. There would be no compassion whatsoever from the ordinary chap in the street if the football thug got a dose of his own medicine —legalised, of course. Those are the rules that they live by, and they are the rules that they must face up to when they commit crime.

On parental responsibility, the do-gooders say, "Parents do their best; they cannot always be responsible." Why cannot they always be responsible? If they have children, they are their responsibility. Children of 12 or 14 have raped old ladies. If the punishment for those kids, had they been over 18, is 10 years, why the hell do we not give it to the parents? They are responsible for kids of that age behaving in that way. I am sick and tired of people saying that they cannot be responsible for the behaviour of their youngsters and teenagers. What a load of nonsense and rubbish.

On prison rioting, the public could not understand how the violent thugs in Strangeways were allowed to get away with it day after day. It is no good my right hon. and learned Friend telling me that he took advice from people in the Home Office who I believe never walk the streets of this country because they do not know what is going on. The ordinary chap in the street asks, "Why weren't they washed off those roofs? Why weren't they brought down?" To suggest that we had to be careful in case one of them was injured or another fell off is a load of nonsense. There would have been a massive cheer if we had taken tough measures to bring them down.

Of course we hear from the do-gooders and the bleeding hearts about prison conditions—"It is dreadful. There are 19 to a cell 23 hours a day and they have to slop out." If they did not slip in, they would not have to slop out, so what are they worried about? Another thing that we must always remember about prisoners is that all those in prison—I accept, of course, that there will be men who should not be there—are there by choice. Prisoners chose to go to prison when they decided to break the law. The ordinary chap in my constituency does not care about people in prison because they chose to go there. We must constantly bear that point in mind.

Why are we spending millions of pounds on improving prison conditions? The better we make them, the easier it will be for them to say, "I like going to pri
come out saying, "I had a good time. That
good and that prison is even better."

Two years ago, I looked at the Christma
Gloucester prison. It was better than the m
many pensioners in my constituency d
alone at Christmas. The priest in charge hel
and said how sorry he was that the prison
from their families at that festive time. I
broken the law, they would not have been a
families. I shall tell the House what I do wh
come to see me and say, "Please, Mr. M
lives in this constituency but he is in prison
you arrange for him to be moved nearer to
family are in distress?" I say, "He should h
that before he broke the law and landed in
fault. I will not waste my time on
circumstances."

I should like to bring rule 43 to the attent
hon. and learned Friend. It is strange that t
criminal in our midst—the child abuser
offender—gets 100 per cent. protection w
prison whereas another violent man, a rob
in the prison community. Because the othe
not like the sex offender—someone who vi
a youngster—or what he has done, we hav
one side and protect him; but who protects
whom he violated? Nobody. So why the h
a man be protected in prison? He should
prison and face the consequences of his crim
offenders realised the life that they would
and the protection that they would not hav
would behave and think twice before co
crimes.

As I have said, the Bill is a good
improving matters, but it does not go as far
I re-emphasise the important point that
shall get another opportunity to debate
capital punishment. Opposition Member
that it is a free vote, but they know and we
are whipped in to vote against capital puni
MEMBERS: "Rubbish."] It is not rubbish
Members know it. I have talked to so
Members about it. The public will not forg
that Opposition Members—and those weal
my hon. Friends—oh yes, we have a few-

Mr. Sheerman: On a point of orde
Speaker. The hon. Gentleman has m
allegation. There is no whipping in the Op
important issue of capital punishment. It
vote. The hon. Gentleman has made a
against my party.

Mr. Dicks: The hon. Gentleman is be
with the truth. I am simply saying that th
country will not forget Opposition Memb
my hon. Friends who frustrate them in th
a tough line against murder. I remind
Friends on the Front Bench that, if they
when pushing this Bill through, they m
opportunity to vote once again on capital

8.52 pm

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): I declare an interest as a barrister and a former solicitor. It is a pity that the hon. Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) who attacked me earlier is not in his place. He had the grace to apologise——

Mr. Sheerman: It is disgraceful. The hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks) is leaving the Chamber.

Mr. Bermingham: Perhaps my hon. Friend will allow me to make just one comment on the hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks), who casts insults without the intelligence or the knowledge to back them up. It is easy to play to the gallery, but we are talking about justice, human beings, the right to life and the liberty of subjects. If we could have a perfect system of justice that would not make mistakes, I should treat the hon. Gentleman's comments with little more than the contempt with which I treat them now.

There have been numerous examples, not just in our legal system, but in the legal systems of many other countries, of mistakes being made. When a mistake is made and a prisoner has been executed, the tragedy is that we cannot bring him back. He cannot be compensated. What if we had executed the Guildford Four who have now been cleared? How could we have compensated them? How, in a civilised society, can we descend into the language of the barbaric jungle, like the hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington, who casts such comments and criticisms because he cannot accept that those of us who have spent a lifetime in the legal system accept that it is capable of making mistakes and we dare not take those risks again?

We have learnt something over the past 100 years, and that is that we cannot always get it right. Sometimes the pressures on a court and on a jury are so great—sometimes the pressure on police officers to achieve results is so great —that mistakes can be made. I do not attack police forces because mistakes have been made, for I accept that police officers are human beings who are capable of verily believing that somebody is guilty and of verily believing that their evidence matches that. They can still be totally wrong, but wrong in an honourable and honest way.

I make this next comment while the Home Secretary is in his place. On Merseyside, we achieved a reduction in the crime rate last year simply because our police force there is increasingly efficient and is led by a very good chief constable, and the officers of the force are a credit to any society. However, this year we are to be capped by £7 million. I have written to the Home Secretary about this and I hope that he will bring pressure on his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment, because if £7 million is taken from the budget of the Merseyside police we will have a reduced number of police officers and we will not be able to afford the equipment that is necessary to re-equip the force. That affects the policing policy. It reduces the level of policing and the level of crime detection. It is utterly counter-productive. I hope that the Home Secretary can do something to help Merseyside because we deserve it.

I know that those comments do not fall within the scope of the Bill and I apologise for raising that matter, but the opportunity was too good to miss. I hope that I have made my point. I notice that the Home Secretary is smiling, so perhaps he will think about what I have said.

In some ways, the Bill is a tragedy. It does not addr the real issue, which is not whether we have longer harsher sentences or whether we attack parole or regra juvenile crime, but how we attack crime itself. The r question is how we stop young offenders offending in first place. If young people do not start to commit crir there will not be any not-so-young people to contir those criminal ways, and there will not be any older peo committing crime. If we can root out part of the juver problem, we can root out part of the criminal proble

The tragedy, which most people seem to forget, is t when somebody robs, wounds, kills or embezzles, there always a victim. Hon. Members have already said that do not care enough about the victims in our society a that is more than true. Over the years, I have spoken in House many times to promote the interests of victims. have tried to get the Criminal Injuries Compensati Board procedure correct. Great efforts have been made Lord Carlisle since he took control of the board and I due credit to him. We have tried to think how we compensate in such a way as to put at ease the mind of old lady whose house has been burgled. The easiest way compensating the victims is to prevent the crime fr occurring. Indeed, crime need not occur if we tackle problem in the right way.

I intervened earlier in the speech of my hon. Friend Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) suggest that we should go for earlier identification. I well aware of the Cardiff experiment, which has b brilliantly successful, and I am equally aware of Massachusetts experiment, which has been equa successful. In those experiments, the early identification the criminal has led to preventive medicine—if I can pu that way—that may deter a sizeable proportion of you people from continuing in a life of crime. If we deter young, that will reduce the number of older you involved in crime and, therefore, the prison populati

The Home Secretary might care to study the Gern system. The Germans have suddenly found that they not need to build new prisons because not as many peo are being sent to prison. There has been a sud downturn, and it might be interesting to discover why little investment in that area—nobody has a monopoly wisdom—might produce massive dividends. It might l to a position in which not so many prisons or rema institutions were needed. The police could again embr the concept that, when a crime is committed, there sufficient manpower and resources to detect it immedi ly. That requires investment. That requires not screams longer sentences, more cruel conditions, this, that and other, but the identifying of the cause of criminality. O we have identified that, we may be on the road to solv the long-term, rather than the short-term, problem.

I await with interest what happens in Committee might just be that we find a measure of agreement that lead us down the right path on this occasion.

9 pm

Mr. Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield): It has been interesting debate. Those of us who have listened to m of it will have learnt a great deal, unlike one Conserva Member who arrived, made an extraordinary speech immediately left. Someone recently described the h Member for Epping Forest (Mr. Norris) as the

[Mr. Barry Sheerman]

underbelly of the Tory party on these issues. Perhaps the hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks) is the hairy posterior.

Mr. Norris: Out of order.

Mr. Sheerman: I am sure that it is in order. Perhaps you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, would like to make a ruling.

During the months that preceded the publication of the Bill, much use was made of the term "twin tracking" to describe the Government's aims in sentencing reform. No one denies that the Government have a dual purpose in framing the legislation, but I prefer to use not that term, but the term "schizoid" to describe the conflicting aims behind the Bill.

There is a genuine desire to reduce the prison population and to introduce proposals to that end. However, there is also a dangerous mixture of punitive sentiment, dogmatic obsession and populist moralising seeping through the Bill's clauses. That heady mix threatens to undermine all the positives in the Bill. Its schizoid nature is revealed most clearly by the Home Secretary's speeches. Indeed, he appears to be unclear about the intention behind the Bill. On some occasions, he has suggested that the Bill aims to reduce the prison population, while on others—for example, at his press conference to launch the Bill—he denies that aim. He repeatedly highlights and hypes the punitive elements in a language that is liable to destroy any tentative steps towards a new sentencing climate.

Let us think about the right hon. and learned Gentleman's speech this afternoon. If he is serious about changing the climate of sentencing policy, it does no one any good to talk about slaps on the wrist. For an adult, a slap on the wrist can add up to 240 hours of community service. That is a strange slap on the wrist, if that is how the Home Secretary describes an existing alternative to prison. He also referred to prisoners loafing around in prison. Has he visited Armley and Brixton? Is loafing about in prison what it is all about? I cannot understand his use of that language. He obviously does not realise that it affects the climate in which we debate these serious issues. He does not understand the damage that he does to what is otherwise, sometimes, a sensible case.

There are positive aspects to the Bill, and my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) outlined them. I shall quickly reiterate them, because we welcome parts of the Bill. We recognise the attempt to establish a statutory framework for sentencing although, as I shall explain later, the proposals to achieve that are weak and insufficient. We especially welcome the statutory criteria contained in clause 1. Such criteria have been beneficial for the under-21s, and it is only right that they should be extended. We welcome the attempt to ensure that the less serious offenders are sentenced for the offence before the court, and not on their previous records.

We support the proposals to introduce unit fines in magistrates courts, to reduce the maximum sentences for theft and non-domestic burglary, and to ensure that 17-year-olds are treated as young persons rather than adults. We wholeheartedly endorse the clauses that implement the Pigot report to reform the law on children's evidence and to provide protection for the child victims of sexual and violent offences.

Even some of the proposals of whi
approve, however, are deficient. Why are
committed for an indictable offence and
served a prison sentence unable to benefit
set out in clause 1? A parliamentary answe
in March revealed that, in 1988, a total of
—a quarter of those found guilty of ind
—received non-custodial sentences.
attempted to discover how many of thos
previously served a prison sentence, but
that information was not available. It is
hundreds of offenders might be denied th
clause 1 for no good reason. If we do
adequate response about that from the Mi
hope that we shall be able to discuss this
in Committee.

The attempt in clause 2 to achieve se
offence and not the record is hopelessly
clause 3(3). I should be happy if the
intervened now to clear up that confusio
clauses may not be exactly contradictory,
confusing. No doubt that kind of draftin
will be interpreted by the courts in differe
will increase the inconsistency that ch
present sentencing system. Some cour
confusion to increase sentences because
record. Clause 3(3) is unnecessary an
dropped.

Why are unit fines not to operate in
accept that far fewer of relevant cases wi
courts, but those fines should be utilised

My major concern about the sentenc
their weakness. The Bill is a lost oppo
Government have failed to grasp the net
reform at the appropriate time. They
provide an acceptable mechanism to f
reducing the prison population. Des
Secretary's comments to the contrary, tha
aim.

We are excessively dependent on priso
United Kingdom imprisons more people
and in proportion to its population
member state of the Council of Europe. T
White Paper "Crime, Justice and Protec
spelt out the limitations of prison clea
prison

"can be an expensive way of making bad
imprisonment provides many good oppo
criminal skills from other inmates."

The Government should have the cou
sentencing council, but instead they
According to the White Paper, it is hop
"the Court of Appeal will give further gui
the legislative framework".

So we are left to rely on a system which,
has failed this country.

In our view, a sentencing council is
forward and most people in the inform
lobby believe that that could be a good
present system. A sentencing council cou
by primary legislation, which would
sentencing principles to underpin its wo

The hon. Member for Epping Forest
about a sentencing council, but that coun
sentencing guidelines for the range of cri
interrelated structure. It would not

monitoring, but would lay down guidelines. That system would be a great advance on current practices whereby the Court of Appeal issues guideline judgments on a limited number of serious cases, but does not provide a coherent and linked structure of guidance. It is vital that guidelines deal with the bulk of everyday offences that come before the courts.

Without a sentencing council, the Government are taking a huge gamble in the Bill. It may contain some good intentions, but there is no mechanism to deliver them. The combined probation and community service order is fraught with dangers. It is likely that that new order will be used in many cases where a simple, single probation order or a community service order would have been used. The Home Office recognises that problem. A recent Home Office costing paper contained an optimistic assumption that 50 per cent. of offenders placed on the combined order will be diverted from prison, half from community service and half from probation. Its pessimistic assumption is that the proportions will be one third, one third and one third.

The memorandum to the Bill suggests that the new order might reduce the prison population by a mere 450 to 750, and there is a further problem in relation to breaches of the order. If an offender who would have received a simple probation order or community service order breaches the new order, he is liable to end up in prison more quickly, since the two sentencing options will be used up in one go. The new order, with its multiple conditions, is more likely to be breached and to be the reverse of what the Government intended will take place. In other words, more people will end up in prison faster.

Without a sentencing council, there are dangers attached to clause 2(2)(b), which deals with violent and sexual offences. I want the Home Secretary to appreciate clearly that the Labour party takes the protection of the public from sexual and violent offences very seriously indeed. The sentences passed by the courts for such offences reflect the gravity with which they are viewed.

But there is an area of concern about the clause because of the failure to define the word "serious," as my right hon. Friend the Member for Sparkbrook pointed out, and there is a lack of mechanism in that matter. It is possible that some offenders who have committed a less grave offence within that category and who, in the public opinion, would not warrant a sentence above the normal range for the offence will receive a sentence usually reserved for graver crimes.

The implementation of the Carlisle proposals on parole is another risky leap in the dark. When I hear the Home Secretary describe the Carlisle report as a punitive measure designed to keep people in prison longer, I feel sympathy with the authors of the report—I understand that Lord Carlisle was listening to our deliberations closely earlier in the day—because they were a group of people with reform at heart who made it clear that they did not want the prison population to rise as a result of their proposals. They must wince to hear their work being abused by the Home Secretary, for the authors of the Carlisle report intended their proposals to go hand in hand with sentencing reforms to ensure that prisoners did not spend longer in custody.

In accepting Carlisle without making effective sentencing reforms, the Government will be responsible for the prison population rising perhaps by as many as 2,000. Many of the prison reform groups are arguing that, and if I were pitching the case for the reform groups, for which I have a high opinion, against the sort of back information that the Home Secretary has been receiving late from his Department, I would back the lobby rat than the Home Office officials.

Mr. Waddington: I remember precisely what Carlisle report said. It expected the courts to reflect in t sentences the fact that the people concerned would, a result of the changes in the parole arrangements, serving sentences more closely related to those passed the courts. There is nothing in Carlisle about setting up involved system and a sentencing council. It is a sim proposition that it expected the courts to reflect in t sentences the fact that people would serve a lar proportion of their sentences, and I invite the h Gentleman to read the report.

Mr. Sheerman: I invite the right hon. and lear Gentleman to read what was said in the debate in the ot place, when Lord Carlisle dealt with that point v strongly indeed. The Carlisle committee expected that reforms would be accompanied by a change in sentenc policy, however delivered. The White Paper contains mechanism to balance one against the other. The resu —I believe that Lord Carlisle holds this opinion—that shall have a larger prison population as a result of failure to act.

The Labour party believes that we should consi whether parole eligibility should remain at one third. Home Secretary should listen, because he misunderstа our opinion on it. I am sure that he does not do deliberately, but he distorts the Opposition's view of t important matter. The Labour party wants to consi whether eligibility should remain at one third, as it is n until effective sentencing reforms are introduced.

When we debated that point after publication of White Paper, the Home Secretary said that the Lab party proposed that violent offenders should be relea after serving one third of their sentence. I can only assu that those comments were made as a result of comp ignorance of the parole system and how it works. Home Secretary must surely be aware that those serv long sentences for violent offences are, rightly, the l successful in obtaining parole.

Statistics contained in the Carlisle report show only 1 per cent. of those sentenced to more than five y in prison come out on parole before serving half t sentence—that is the truth of the matter. Only 13 per c of those serving between four and five years come before the halfway mark. Many of them are likely to serving sentences for non-violent offences. Vio offenders rarely come out of prison before serving their sentence, under the arrangements we support. Government's proposals for long-term violent offen merely recognise the status quo. It is the short-t non-violent offenders who will be penalised.

The Bill is an enormous gamble. Its memoranc suggests that the sentencing proposals will reduce prison population by a mere 1,500. But the pa proposals could well increase the prison population 2,000. The figure of 1,500 gives every impression of b pulled out of a hat. During the Conservative leader contest this week we have heard much reference to s and scribbles on the backs of envelopes early in the ca

[Mr. Sheerman]

of one of the contenders. The figure of 1,500 seems to have been scribbled on the back of an envelope and it cannot be justified by any serious research.

I do not believe that the Home Office has any idea of the total effect of that package in the Criminal Justice Bill, which hardly inspires confidence in the proposals. The Home Secretary shakes his head, but most informed people think that the Bill's result in terms of prison population will be a total gamble. Most people argue that predicting the Bill's result is guesswork and that it could either reduce the prison population or increase it. We know for sure that no one really knows the answer. It is strange for a Government to be in that position when introducing a major Criminal Justice Bill, the intention of which was trailed as being a reduction in the prison population. They do not know whether the Bill will deliver that result.

The Government are also displaying a cavalier attitude to the probation service. No doubt the Minister of State, as he normally does, will refer to a window of opportunity for the probation service to enable it to expand its work. But quantity is not everything; quality is so vital in the work. Sometimes, as I sit listening to the Government's opinion of the probation service it makes me think that they want to kill the goose that lays the golden egg. On all the criteria, the service is pretty efficient, cost effective, saves an enormous amount of money and has a marvellous body of people working in it who deliver the goods. The Government constantly snipe at the service's morale and performance. The Government always want to change the qualities that have made the service so effective. Quantity is not everything; quality matters, too. The Government are happy to jettison some of the best traditions of the probation service. We believe that their plans will make it harder for officers to win the trust of offenders and will undermine the service's constructive and positive work with offenders—work which is a necessary component of community-based sanctions.

We believe strongly in the alternatives to prison, but we argue that many of the alternatives have not been tried by the judiciary or by the magistrates. We are in favour of expanding the range of options as long as they build on the central tradition of the probation service in a way that is not punitive in the sense in which the Government like to use that term.

The probation service has delivered a good service, but the Home Secretary tends not to say that in his speeches. He should give it a pat on the back, not a slap on the wrist. He should find out why the service is so successful and expand it within its traditions. The difficulty is that the Government are doing the opposite. They are abandoning the traditional spirit and principles behind probation work and replacing them with a punitive philosophy with which most probation officers will find it difficult to work. They believe that it will be much less effective than the system that has hitherto prevailed.

We very much like about 20 per cent. of the Bill and will support and improve that percentage in Committee. Fifty per cent. of it has some good sentiments and intentions, although the drafting is confused. We, as a responsible Opposition, will ensure that the Bill leaves Committee greatly improved. It is the Opposition who have policies, ideas and vision in this area and who can therefore improve the Bill. About 30 per cent. of the Bill is damnable —wrong in conception and in every possible way.

Let us start with one of the most objectionable parts —curfew orders and electronic tagging or monitoring. The Home Secretary talked about electronic nagging earlier in the most amusing part of his speech—I rather enjoyed that bit. We believe that electronic monitoring is a retrograde step. Measures such as these are misguided and unproductive. It pained me to hear the chairman of Crime Concern, the hon. Member for Epping Forest, speak of tagging in glowing terms. The Opposition have a high regard for Crime Concern, but I wonder whether the hon. Gentleman has examined the American experience. Has he seen the disaster that tagging has been in the United States? Has he looked at the research? I had thought that Crime Concern used proper research and then applied it. The small experiment in electronic tagging in this country was a disaster, and longer-term experiments in the United states have also been disastrous——

Mr. Norris: Just for the record, let me say that I was expressing a personal view. I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's kind remarks about Crime Concern, bu: I should be grateful if he made it clear that I am not speaking for that organisation.

Thanks to the courtesy of the American Government, I spent most of September in America looking at crime, particularly inner city crime, in at least two states: Texas and New Mexico. I was struck by the effectiveness of the tagging schemes there, although I agree that their usefulness has not yet been proven in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Sheerman: The hon. Gentleman ought to put this in context. It puzzles me when people troop off to the United States to learn about its criminal justice system and its drugs and imprisonment policies. The American criminal justice system is a total disaster. More than 1 million people are in prison over there, and the number is mounting. Schemes such as electronic tagging, which are designed to keep people out of prison, have resulted in a steady increase in the prison population. We need no lessons from the United States. Its criminal justice system is a disaster. I include in that description the use of privately owned penal establishments for remand prisoners.

We object strenuously to curfew orders. Negative measures of that kind are misguided and unproductive. Constructive measures are far more likely to deter offenders from committing further crimes. That view is shared by the courts. Curfew requirements for juveniles have been available to the courts since 1983. Nobody, however, imposes curfew orders. If they are hardly ever used for juveniles, why expand their use? Most magistrates do not impose curfew orders.

Electronic monitoring is a foolish gimmick, with important implications for civil liberties. The evidence from the United States is bleak, and the so-called experiment in this country was a complete fiasco. During the experiment, 50 offenders were tagged, 28 of whom breached the conditions. Faced with such a failure, any other Government would gracefully retreat.

Mr. Waddington: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Sheerman: No, I do not intend to give way during this part of my argument.

When I listen to the Home Secretary's arguments about tagging I remember that he was very much behind the short, sharp shock of 10 or 11 years ago. The Government loved it; they were all extremely keen on it. Research similarly found that it was a failure but, unperturbed, the Government expanded the scheme. Eventually, they were forced to jettison it because, time and again, research showed that it did not work. It was a long, hard lesson for them. We believe that tagging will suffer the same fate.

The sentencing proposals for children and young persons make depressing reading. The Government's schizoid tendancy comes through clearly. They want to reduce the number of young people in custody, but their punitive instincts get in the way. Sensibly, they suggest that 17-year-olds should come within the more constructive sentencing traditions of the juvenile court, but at the same time they are prepared to tamper with the juvenile system, which is one of the few bright spots in the entire criminal justice system. Why on earth alter a system that works? Why on earth increase the maximum period of community service for 16-year-olds?

The Government make unrealistic and populist suggestions regarding parental responsibility. Of course parental responsibility is important, but can one imagine that in families where there is enormous tension and stress between child and parent and where parents have lost control of their offspring a court bind-over would be effective? It is a ludicrous suggestion. It is far more likely to exacerbate tension and lead to family breakdowns.

The courts already have considerable discretion in these cases. They can use fines and bind-overs where their use seems to be appropriate. I hope that the Minister will tell us why he takes no notice of the Magistrates Association. It does not want these powers; it does not think that they will work. The Magistrates Association does not want the new clauses.

As for the inevitable privatisation proposals, who would have thought 10 years ago that privatisation mania would be extended to remand prisoners and prison escorts? Who would have thought that the Government would want to make money out of locking people up? The deprivation of liberty should be the unique responsibility of the state. We cannot allow the development of a powerful lobby with a vested interest in keeping the remand population high. It would be a disgrace. It is scandalous that the Government's only response to the remand crisis is to build private prisons. It is regrettable that the Government have pushed ahead with those daft ideas before receiving the full report of the Woolf inquiry. Lord Justice Woolf has made it clear that remand prisoners come within his remit. I hope that the Home Secretary will see sense and that Woolf will come through in time so that we can amend the Bill before it is too late.

There are so many things missing from the Bill. Where is the commitment to end the remanding and sentencing of juveniles to prison department establishments? All we have is a clause to end custodial sentencing for 14-year-olds. That is welcome, but it affects only 200 young people.

Where are the clauses to tackle racism in the criminal justice system? There is a hint of amnesia from the Home Secretary on that. Those are vital provisions if there is to be equality of treatment before the law. What a slap in the face—not a pat on the head—for the black community to be consulted in October and ignored in November. The remarks of the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) about the black and Asian community were disgraceful in a civilised society. It is a disgrace to suggest in the stereotyped way that he did that the black community has a tendency to criminality. I hope that the Home Secretary and the Minister will repudiate his remarks.

Where are the clauses on victims' rights and crime prevention? Many of my hon. Friends and some Conservative Members have talked about those enormous gaps. There is nothing on crime prevention, prisoners' rights or miscarriages of justice.

This is a weak and limited Bill. At its heart it lacks an effective mechanism to operationalise some of its good intentions. Its schizoid nature threatens to undermine its good parts. Sentencers are being sent a dual message. All our experience suggests that only the punitive message will prevail. That makes it a bad Bill.

9.31 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. John Patten): I woke up on the morning after my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State launched the Criminal Justice Bill two Fridays ago to look at the leader columns in the *Daily Mail* and *The Guardian*. Both the leaders in those excellent newspapers praised my right hon. and learned Friend for the excellence of his Bill. That made me think that we may have got it more or less right. We welcome the approbation that we have received from most of the penal affairs groups. They may have quarrels over particular details—they may want sentencing councils or they may not like electronic monitoring—but they like the overall drift of the Bill. Such points were recognised by the hon. Members for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) and for Ynys Môn (Mr. Jones). I hope that we shall hear the voice of the hon. Member for Ynys Môn in Committee.

I want to have a word with the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman) because he made several important points. He seems to be screwing up his notes and destroying them. They deserve to be preserved for posterity. He wants the Bill to be improved in Committee. I intend to debate the Bill with the same seriousness as we debated the Criminal Justice Act 1988. During the passage of that Act I was pleased to have the opportunity to say publicly, for example, that some of the issues in the Act found their fountainhead in ideas that had been developed by the Labour party. In 1986, the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) took the first important step to ensure that victims of rape were not identified in the press, and we built on that in the 1988 Act. I hope that such an approach can mark our discussions on the parts of the Bill where there is no party political dissent. Many parts of the Bill have nothing to do with party politics and everything to do with sentencing practice, common sense and trying to ensure that offenders get their just deserts and victims are compensated. That is the way in which I hope that the Committee will approach the Bill.

In 1988, our approach to the Bill did not just stop with my occasionally tossing a bouquet to the Labour party Front Bench. There was even collusion between the Opposition Front Bench and the Conservative Front Bench. The hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor), who now speaks on the environment, and I were under

[Mr. John Patten]

severe pressure from the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mrs. Golding) to do something about children's evidence and video-taping. A Committee knows nothing more fearsome than the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme when she is enraged and putting people under pressure. Enormous strength of character was required for the hon. Member for Dewsbury and I to resist her blandishments. That led to the Pigot report, and I hope that the encompassing of most of that report in the Bill will receive her approval. I shall return to her remarks because she made it clear that she wants us to go a little further on one or two points, which I look forward to with some trepidation.

The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland rather generously mentioned one of the effects of the enactment of the Bill. On reflection, I thought that I was a little rude to him in the debate, but unlike some right hon. and hon. Members I am quite prepared to apologise and hope that he accepts it. In five, 10 or 15 years' time, the Bill may be seen as one of the benchmarks in the development of the criminal justice system. Until the 16th and 17th centuries, the purpose of prisons was not to punish but to hold people until they were produced in court. Generally, the capital sentence was passed on them or something disagreeable was done to their person. Prisons were not intended to punish, with the exception of debtors.

In the 16th and 17th centuries, we saw a great change in the system from executing or flogging people to imprisoning them. Prison has been seen as the right punishment throughout the 17th, 18th, 19th and 20th centuries. Everything else has been seen as an alternative to prison.

When the Bill is enacted—I do not know whether I am right or wrong, but time will tell—it will be seen as a benchmark and as a twin-track approach to crime and punishment that leads to fewer prisoners being imprisoned for longer for serious and violent crimes and people who used to be imprisoned for minor or petty crimes being punished more effectively in the community. That is the underlying principle of the Bill.

The hon. Member for Huddersfield made several points. First, he spoke of the drafting of the Bill. He should beware of being rude about parliamentary draftsmen, who, particularly in this country, excel in drafting Bills. A Bill is drafted under ministerial instruction, but it is a pity if the hon. Gentleman takes incitement from the remarks of a don that he heard on the "Today" programme this morning about sloppy drafting—a rather confused and eccentric don, and as I used to be one, I know one when I hear one. He said that the Bill was a load of codswallop because, for example, it contains no reference to mitigation. That don—I do not know his name, but if I did I would hope to forget it very quickly and would ensure that none of my children went to his college—had not got as far as clause 3, where "mitigation" is mentioned. President Routh of Magdalene college was the last of my constituents to wear a full-bottomed wig, rather like yours, Mr. Deputy Speaker. He told some young pupil, "Always verify your references." That comment applies to the remarks that have been made about the Bill and that have been picked up by the hon. Member for Huddersfield. If he does not verify his references, he should at least read the Bill.

Mr. Sheerman: My comments had nothing to do with *The Guardian* article but were based on what we all knew —that the Government set impossible demands for the parliamentary draftsmen. We know that they sent the Bill back and said, "This is awful and cannot be put into any framework that we know of." We know about the to-ing and fro-ing of the Bill. It is the Government's fault, not that of the parliamentary draftsmen.

Mr. Patten: I am afraid that the Labour party seems prone to making allegations without any foundation. The hon. Gentleman said something that is not a fact and made a grievous mistake. He clearly does not understand the way in which such a Bill should be drafted. He asked why the Bill did not contain any mention of "seriousness". No Bill, with all the schedules in the world, and no sentencing council, with all the wisdom in the world, could lay down for each conceivable crime every point that would have to be taken into account in judging seriousness.

The courts have been judging seriousness for years. In a domestic burglary case, a judge will consider the amount of property stolen, the fear felt by the occupier, the breach of trust involved and the element of premeditation. In each of those ways the courts are used to applying the principle of seriousness. The hon. Member for Huddersfield is asking for the impossible if he thinks that there is any possibility in any statute or on any sentencing council of completely defining seriousness.

I regretted a bit what the hon. Member for Huddersfield said about the probation service. He suggested that my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary and I did not value it and that the probation service did not look forward with interest to the challenges that the Bill and future reorganisations of the service might bring. That is not right. Do not just watch our lips; watch the cheque books. Look at the line in the public expenditure White Paper, which shows that, over the next three years, there will be a 27 per cent. real increase in spending on the probation service. Look at the extra 800 or 900 probation officers who will be employed. Look at articles in the past week or so by the chairman of the Association of Chief Officers of Probation. Of course, he does not like this or that part of the Bill, but the Bill presents an enormous opportunity for the probation service. I am convinced that the professionalism of the service, with its exercise of caring authority, will make some parts of the Bill work in a way that the hon. Member for Huddersfield thinks is impossible.

It was entirely characteristic of the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) that at no stage did he mention victims. He mentioned offenders and raised several questions, led by one about delays in remand. By spring next year, the 112-day limit on remands will be in place in London and in the eight other counties in the south-east where it is not in place now. Implementation has taken a long time because of differences in court practice.

Several questions about standards in private remand centres were raised. I understand why the House wants to ensure that prisoners on remand are kept in good conditions. The contracts will be kept open. There will be open competitive tendering. The prison service will be able to enter the bidding for private remand centres. A Home Office civil servant, probably prison officer grade, will be

appointed as the controller in the different remand centres to ensure that standards are met. All the functions are set out clearly in clauses 66 and 68.

The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook asked why we were introducing minimum standards for remand centres but were not introducing minimum standards for prisons. We are concentrating on doing something about the prison estate, which, over the generations before 1979, fell into a shameful condition. There will be a record number of prisons. The new sanitation services being put in place will ensure that, by 1994, 75 per cent. of prisoners will have access to night sanitation. We are not talking about it; we are actually doing it. We shall provide straightforward —and certainly not soft—conditions. We are also waiting for the recommendations of Lord Justice Woolf, and my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary has said that he will wait for the recommendations of the Woolf committee to see whether there are any recommendations about the introduction of minimum standards.

The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook also raised an important point about the punishments available for white-collar criminals, which was a point that interested him. A cocktail of punishments is available for white-collar criminals outside prison. We are, of course, talking about minor criminals because major City fraudsters who breach a trust seriously and who are found guilty will probably be given a long prison sentence, as hon. Members of all parties would agree was right.

There are several ingredients for minor white-collar criminals, including compensation for the victim. When the courts decide to punish someone outside prison, they should put even the fine second to compensation for the victim. That is a cultural change in sentencing, which all of us want to see. The ingredients include, as I said, compensation plus—and I emphasise the word "plus"—a fine, plus community service for up to 100 hours, plus a curfew, plus attendance at the probation centre—the old attendance centre—plus a probation sentence as a sentence of the court. If all those ingredients were applied, some minor white-collar criminals might see that as a lot tougher than spending three or four months in gaol. I hope that it would be a lot tougher, and that it would lead to the rehabilitation of some of those people and, most importantly, to repayment for the victim. I am sometimes angry when minor criminals go to gaol because they are prevented from repaying victims. If the courts use compensation orders more, there will be far more satisfaction for victims.

The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook talked about our attitude to parental responsibility, and the argument on that swung backwards and forwards during the debate. My hon. Friend the Member for Congleton (Mrs. Winterton) feels strongly that much of the recent increase in crime is connected to the breakdown of parental responsibility. Opposition Members whose views I respect, such as the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer), said that it would be difficult to use the criminal justice system alone to make parents responsible. My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary recognises that and he said earlier that he did not expect the criminal justice system to cure all the problems of children offending.

The provisions about parental responsibility are just one limb of the Government's programme. We have introduced provisions in the Children Act 1989 on welfare to help children in trouble and to set up children's centres. My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science are also actively discussing whether we can do far more about truancy to ensure not that we punish children, but that we get them to school. A cocktail of provisions is coming from the Government, which together represent a far more integrated approach to dealing with children offending and with parental responsibility. The criminal justice measures are just one part of that mixture.

I now refer with considerable pleasure to the speech of my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Buxton——

Mr. Lawrence: For Burton.

Mr. Patten: I beg my hon. and learned Friend's pardon. He made an important point about the need——

Mr. Lawrence: Will my right hon. Friend kindly remember for future speeches that Burton is the brewing centre of the United Kingdom? He should never forget that.

Mr. Patten: I look forward to discussing the issues later in the XXXX bar.

My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton asked whether there would be sufficient resources for probation reports. Over the next three years, we shall put 54 per cent. more in cash terms and 27 per cent. more in real terms into the probation service, which should lead to between 800 and 1,000 more probation officers. There will also be national standards for the writing of probation reports.

My hon. and learned Friend was also interested to know whether sentencing could take records and the evil disposition of a repeat offender into account. If my hon. and learned Friend, with his characteristic care, reads clause 3(3), he will find that those matters can be taken into account in sentencing by having regard to the aggravating and mitigating circumstances.

My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton was the first of several of my hon. Friends to raise the issue of capital punishment. It was taken up by my hon. Friends the Members for Congleton, for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) and for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks), who made such an interesting speech. Thank heaven that my hon. Friend puts the R into robust in what he says. I think that my hon. and learned Friend and my three hon. Friends wish to see the return of capital punishment and all wish to debate the matter—*[Interruption.]* Order! Bolsover—sit down!

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Surely the Minister is seeking to do your job. I know that there is disarray within the Government, but the right hon. Gentleman has no business talking like that.

Mr. Speaker: I quite agree.

Mr. Patten: That is right—I am glad that the hon. Gentleman is sitting down like a good boy. Opposition Members need the smack of firm discipline, Mr. Speaker.

As I was saying, my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton and my hon. Friends the Members for Congleton, for Thanet, North and for Hayes and Harlington all wish there to be a debate on capital punishment at an early date. I know that junior Ministers cannot stray into the area of business management, which is for my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House. I shall,

[Mr. Patten]

of course, convey the views of my hon. and learned Friend and of my hon. Friends to my right hon. Friend as soon as possible.

The right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West described himself as an old lag of the Criminal Justice Bill world. He raised some important issues, which I know he will reintroduce in Committee. I thought that it was a bit ripe when he said that we were not putting enough resources into the prison officers' establishment. As I recall the figures, there was one prison officer for every six prisoners in 1918. There was one officer for every three prisoners in 1979, and one for every two in 1990. It is a bit much to suggest that we are not staffing our prisons properly.

Many important matters were raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby). I share his concern about attacks on the police and I shall consider carefully what he said about that and his other arguments.

Perhaps my hon. Friend the Member for Epping Forest (Mr. Norris) has had enough plaudits from hon. Members on both sides of the Chamber during the evening. He does an invaluable job as chairman of Crime Concern. If I may say so, with his record on civil liberties he was able to demolish the facetious and fallacious arguments that were used to suggest that electronic monitoring somehow trammels people's civil liberties. He did so in a manner that was masterly and brilliant.

The hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) has considerable experience as a justice of the peace and in working with young people. I listened with great care to what he had to say. I hope that he accepts that the figures that I gave to my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton show that the probation service will receive a considerable injection of money and of additional men and women, even if he thinks that the figures are not high enough. I am glad that the hon. Gentleman was generous about some parts of the Bill.

My hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North drew a clear distinction between violent offenders who perhaps should receive maximum sentences and more effective community punishments. The entire House listened with care to what he had to say.

The hon. Member for Ynys Môn reflected the importance of drawing a clear division between violent and non-violent crime. This reforming and radical Bill of my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary gives clear signposts and makes it clear how that division should be arrived at.

I cannot refer now to my hon. Friend the Member for Hayes and Harlington because he is no longer here, so I shall move on, lastly, to the hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham). I apologise that I was not in the Chamber to hear all his speech. The hon. Gentleman referred to Germany, and I have visited that country. I have spoken to the judiciary in Germany about the ways in which changes have been brought about there and have been told that they have been made largely by talk or discussion and not by additional resources. That is what I was told during my recent visit when I talked to those concerned about changes in sentencing practice.

The word "sentencing" brings me back to the theme that has run throughout our debate—the need for a sentencing council. That need has been pressed on us by right hon. and hon. Members on the Opposition Bench At the end of a long process that begins with a crime t may or may not be seen or reported, recorded prosecuted, there may be a prosecution, which may or n not be successful, and a judge or a recorder such as right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West will h to take one of those awesome, difficult and lonely decisi about what sentence or bail to give.

I remember a speech made by the Lord Chief Justic the other place a few years ago in which he referred to loneliness of the judge. Experts around the Chamber s as the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook want to m judges, recorders, deputy recorders and magistrates a less lonely by giving them the advice of a sentenc council. If a sentencing council is to be only advisory, w happens to it if the judiciary does not like what it says that case, we might turn to Parliament and say tha should have more statutory force. Suppose a sentenc council says, "We would like you, as a Government, suggest that there should be changes of this sort, that or some other sort in sentencing practice." As sovereign body, the House might decide that it does like the guidance of the sentencing council. Would suc sentencing council, which I am sure would have the g and the good on it, be worth the deliberations that h been expended on it?

We could look at the alphabet of legal experts and s at A with my noble Friend Lord Alexander in anot place, who is the president of Justice. He might believe a sentencing council would be good. Professor Ashwo has written two books on sentencing councils, which c another scheme. However, if we want a sentencing cou we are drawn in the world of sentencing down following route: if an advisory sentencing council does work, it must be mandatory. [HON. MEMBERS: "Borin Some Opposition Members should have been in Chamber earlier when sentencing councils were referre in all the speeches.

If we are drawn down the route of an advi sentencing council, it will never be effective. It must h a statutory basis. If we have a statutory sentencing cou it will end up like the experience in the United St Besides having a ration in Minnesota of prison pl during any one year, the judges in that state are prese with a sentencing grid. They have 43 offences on one and six criminal histories on the other. A comp virtually works out the sentence given to the court. All makes me suspect that there is a hidden agenda in Labour party in the suggestion of a sentencing council know the Opposition's hidden agendas in respect of o aspects of the criminal justice system. Back in October saw the hon. Member for Huddersfield having his w slapped by the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook having raised the veil on the Labour party's plans to the police under local authority control. We know that will be in the next Labour manifesto.

Equally, on parole, the right hon. Member Sparkbrook, having given a public greeting to proposals, said that, after all, he wanted his party to n towards a one third reduction in the length of time people spent in prison. Again we can see what the hon. Gentleman really wants to do—to reduce the nu of people in our prisons not because they should n there but because he simply wishes to see fewer peop prison. Executive release is clearly what the right Member for Sparkbrook wants. Labour wants also t

judges' hands. I tell my right hon. and hon. Friends that the threats to the independence of the criminal justice system and the police are formidable.

The Bill marks a watershed in the future of the criminal justice system by this radical and reforming Government of the past 11 years and it will see us into the 1990s and the next century.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 190, Noes 350.

Division No. 7] **[10 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Benton, Joseph
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Duffy, A. E. P.
Eadie, Alexander
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Heal, Mrs Sylvia
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Hara, Edward
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terence
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Allen MacKay, and
Mr. Martyn Jones.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Alton, David
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas
Ashby, David
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Bellingham, Henry
Bellotti, David
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cartwright, John
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim

Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Sir Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lilley, Peter
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
McCrindle, Sir Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
Maclennan, Robert
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maginnis, Ken
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Moss, Malcolm
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Sir Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir J
Steel, Rt Hon Sir Dav
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastw*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherw*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian (
Stokes, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solli*
Taylor, Matthew *(Tru*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norm
Temple-Morris, Pete
Thompson, D. *(Calde*
Thompson, Patrick (
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bric*
Townsend, Cyril D. (
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trimble, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon
Wakeham, Rt Hon J
Waldegrave, Rt Hon
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side*
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Be*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Noes:
Sir George Young
Mr. David Lightbo

Question accordingly negatived.

Main Question put forthwith, pursuant to Order No. 60 (Amendment on Second or Third) and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time, and committed to a Standing Committee, pursuant to Standing Order (Committal of Bills).

Business of the House

10.16 pm

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John MacGregor): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a short business statement.

The business for the remainder of this week will now be as follows:

WEDNESDAY 21 NOVEMBER—Until about seven o'clock, second reading of the Disability Living Allowance and Disability Working Allowance Bill, followed by Second Reading of the Armed Forces Bill.

Motion on the Statistics of Trade Act 1947 (Amendment of Schedule) Order 1990.

THURSDAY 22 NOVEMBER—Debate on the Opposition motion of no confidence in Her Majesty's Government.

FRIDAY 23 NOVEMBER—As I announced last week, there will be a debate on the GATT round of trade negotiations on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): Since clearly the Prime Minister commands the support of only 204 Members of this House and my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition commands the support of 227 Members, should not the Prime Minister resign now? Is it not clear that there is not now, and never ever again will be, an honest majority in this House in support of the Prime Minister's policies? Is it not clear beyond doubt that the party of government in charge of the affairs of this nation is hopelessly and irreconcilably split from top to bottom? In those circumstances, would it not be far better for the people of Britain to decide who the next Prime Minister should be in a general election as soon as possible?

Mr. MacGregor: As I made clear this afternoon, there was a clear and large majority for the vote at the end of the Queen's Speech debates. I suggest that the hon. Gentleman waits to see what the majority vote is on Thursday evening.

Mr. Peter Bottomley (Eltham): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that it is likely to be in order in the debate on Thursday, if others raise the question of the number of votes, to draw the attention of the House to the fact that in the election for the leadership of the Labour party in 1983 there were 101 votes for the other three candidates and 102 for the present leader of the Labour party?

Mr. MacGregor: I suspect that that and a number of similar points will be made during the debate on Thursday.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I underline what the Leader of the House said. I ask hon. Members to put questions about the change of business and not to make debating points which may well be made in the debate.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): I am sure that the Leader of the House is only too grateful to the Leader of the Opposition for tabling the one motion which can be guaranteed to unite the Conservative party—*[Interruption.]*—albeit a superficial unity. Will the right hon. Gentleman agree that with important issues facing the country—on our relationship with our European partners, about the economy and about how the country is governed—we shall be governed by a broken-backed Government and that the only vote of confidence is the vote of the people?

Mr. MacGregor: I assure the hon. Gentleman that there are many issues on which we on the Government Benches are agreed and united.

Mr. William Ross (Londonderry, East): Does the right hon. Gentleman understand that the Members of the Ulster Unionist party find it not so much surprising as astonishing that the motion should have been tabled at this moment? May we be assured that there will be a calm and rational debate on the real issues that have divided not only the Conservative party but the Labour party—the relationship between this nation and the other nations in Europe and on the question whether we are to become part of a full federal Europe?

Mr. MacGregor: The choosing of the debate on Thursday was not a matter for me. I am sure that many subjects will be raised during that debate.

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): The Leader of the House was gracious enough to refer to the Queen's Speech and to say that the Government had received a big majority in the vote at the end of that debate, even though we did not see in the Queen's Speech any reference to a proposed referendum on the exchange rate mechanism. May we be assured that the Prime Minister will, from the Dispatch Box, respond to the motion of censure and not evade the debate, as she did recently?

Mr. MacGregor: It is not normal to announce speakers during a business statement—*[Interruption.]*—and that is a statement of fact. But I can tell the House that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister will open for the Government, as is normal in such debates.

Mr. Jim Sillars (Glasgow, Govan): Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that this must be the first time in parliamentary history that the Leader of the Opposition has tabled a censure motion not to wound or bring down the Prime Minister but to save her? *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Sillars: Is he further aware that if the Leader of the Opposition succeeds in saving Thatcher, thereby retaining the poll tax, the people of Scotland will exact a price from him at Paisley?

Mr. MacGregor: It is not for me to comment on the hon. Gentleman's remarks on the position of the Labour party.

Mr. John Morris (Aberavon): May we be told who will be handed the poisoned chalice of being the second speaker for the Government in Thursday's debate?

Mr. MacGregor: As I said, it is normal to announce the speakers for any debate in the normal way, not on the business statement.

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): When the Prime Minister opens for the Government, will she be using a broken bat?

Mr. MacGregor: I do not think it is necessary for me to comment on that.

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): Is the Leader of the House aware that I have some sympathy with him tonight, having been attacked by the former Liberals, now the Liberal Democrats, and the Scottish National party? After all is said and done, they voted with the Tories in 1979 to bring down the Labour Government. Their great fear—the hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Sillars) has been here before; that is his big problem—is that we shall succeed on Thursday and bring down the Government.

Mr. MacGregor: I am becoming increasingly aware that the questions being directed to me tonight have nothing to do with me or with the business statement.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Now that 152 Tory Members have impaled the Prime Minister on the barbed wire, may we assume that, in Thursday's debate, Ministers who failed to support the Prime Minister in today's ballot will be brought to heel for failing to carry out collective responsibility?

Mr. MacGregor: As I said this afternoon, the hon. Gentleman has a vivid imagination, and I do not know where he gets his facts from.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): Given that the Leader of the House has full control over the announcement that he made this evening, why did he not announce a two-day debate for Wednesday and Thursday? That might have given the Prime Minister two chances to drag herself away from the ballet to come here and justify the past 11 years of attacks on working class people.

Mr. MacGregor: It makes sense to rearrange the business as I have, so that the House can take the Second Readings of the two Bills that we were due to take this week, which is precisely what I have done.

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): As Thursday's debate will probably be televised live, and as the Government's previous diktat to the broadcasting authorities was that they should ensure that everyone got a fair kick of the ball, may we take it that the Prime Minister will be kicking off and Tarzan will be taking the penalties in extra time?

Mr. MacGregor: Who is called in the debate is not a matter for me.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): Does the Leader of the House accept that, if we work out the arithmetic, there is an overwhelming majority in the House against the Prime Minister's flagship, the poll tax? We would expect, particularly in Scotland, notwithstanding the result on Thursday, that legislation would immediately be brought in because the people of Scotland resisted the tax by every peaceful means, including non-payment. It is that signal, and that signal alone, that has brought the Government to their present plight.

Mr. MacGregor: The hon. Gentleman raises points that have nothing to do with the business statement.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Leader of the House seen the Press Association h this evening? There have been many amazing h but the one to which I shall draw his attention—

Mr. Speaker: Order. Is this about the statement?

Mr. Banks: It is, Mr. Speaker. The headline s "Patten warns of extinction threat."
It goes on to say that one third of the world's sp be extinct by 2025. I am not sure whether tha reference to the time or the year. Will the Lead House tell the public—because many people do n —what precisely will happen if the Government motion on Thursday?

Mr. MacGregor: The hon. Gentleman should see what the result is on Thursday. In view of wh just said, I have not the slightest doubt that h extremely disappointed.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Will the L the House confirm that on Friday there will be a d the general agreement on tariffs and trade? Can I the House that a Minister from the Department and Industry will be present, because this broke Government cannot now enter such negotiatio concern the replacement of the multi-fibre arra and its phasing out—with any confidence becau continuing balloting? Does not the right hon. G realise that jobs in the textile industry are b because of the Government's inactivity? Does realise that the people of Bradford, like the re nation, want to vote on this issue and get the To They do not want business statements from the L the House; they want an announcement from t Minister of a general election which would le decide.

Mr. MacGregor: I have already commented times today on the point about a general electi confirm that a Minister from the Department of T Industry will deal with the GATT debate, and I a textiles will be an issue in it. I wholly reject Gentleman's charge about the position Government.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE BILL [MONE

Queen's Recommendation having been signifie

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting Criminal Justice Bill, it is expedient to authorise the out of money provided by Parliament of—

(1) any sums required by the Secretary of making payments under contracts ent under the Act, or payments to or in t inspectors of probation appointed under

(2) any sums so required for defraying the ex the Parole Board, or any expenses inc members of lay panels appointed under t

(3) any administrative expenses incurred Secretary of State under the Act; and

(4) any increase attributable to the Act in payable out of money so provided under Act.—*[Mr. Sackville.]*

Shipbuilding

[Relevant document: European Community Document No. 9416/90 on the shipbuilding industry in the Community in 1989.]

10.30 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Industry and Consumer Affairs (Mr. Edward Leigh): I beg to move,

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 8097/90 relating to aid for shipbuilding; and supports the Government's intention to agree to the adoption of this Directive as a further step towards establishing a soundly based shipbuilding industry in the European Community.

The document is the European Commission's proposal for a seventh directive on aid to shipbuilding, following the sixth directive which expires on 31 December 1990. The final rounds of negotiations on the directive are under way in Brussels and it forms a substantial item in the Industry Council's agenda for 26 November, at which I hope to represent the Government.

The sixth directive is generally considered to have worked well in that it has enabled the Community's industry to survive by providing production and restructuring aid. The proposal for the seventh directive was, therefore, based closely on the text of the sixth. The Commission proposes that it should last for two years.

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): Will the Minister take this opportunity to rectify a flaw in the directive because of which naval shipyards that were put into the private sector to compete on merchant shipping orders have been denied intervention fund assistance? Does not he realise that companies such as A and P Appledore (Aberdeen) Ltd. in my constituency have suffered badly because of this flaw? If he wants straight competition, let him have it, and let such yards have access to the intervention funds on which their existence may well depend.

Mr. Leigh: That point concerns many hon. Members, especially in the light of the Cammell Laird problem and of the other problems that the hon. Gentleman has just mentioned. We have checked this with the European Commission. A watertight agreement was made, when those yards were privatised, that they would not be eligible for state aid. The Commission has made it clear that it has no objection to merchant shipbuilding taking place at Cammell Laird, but under no circumstances will it countenance our returning to the Commission and receiving state aid. That is the problem. We have gone over this ground again and again. I wish that I could help the hon. Gentleman, but I hope that I have at least described the position clearly.

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): The Minister says that a watertight agreement was made. The words "exceptional circumstances" were included in it. Given the support that the European Community is to give to east German shipyards, are not we facing exceptional circumstances?

Mr. Leigh: I am aware of those words. We went over that ground with the Commission. Unfortunately, it is unwilling to budge on that point. I shall deal in a moment with east German shipyards. Our view is that we should stand firm against the Germans on the restructuring of ea German shipyards. It would add to the existi overcapacity in shipbuilding.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Will the Minist give way?

Mr. Leigh: I am in the hands of the House. This is short debate and a number of hon. Members want to tal part in it. I am happy to give way and answer questior but it will lengthen my speech.

Mr. Cryer: Can the Minister summarise the position outlined by my hon. Friends by saying that the right ho Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Ridle appears to be absolutely right?

Mr. Leigh: I am not sure what the hon. Gentleman referring to. As the most junior member of t Government, I think that I should be wise to stick to t sixth and seventh directives.

Mr. Frank Field: Will the hon. Gentleman give wa

Mr. Leigh: If the hon. Gentleman wishes to interve later in the debate, I shall happily give way, but I want make some progress. That is only fair to hon. Membe who wish to take part in this short debate.

The new directive should be viewed against t background of improving markets in shipbuildi throughout the world and a diminishing gap betwe prices in Europe and the far east. The justification for programme of state aid to shipbuilding in Europe h always been the low prices charged by shipbuilders Korea and Japan in particular, which, over the last years, have enlarged the supply base against a decreasi market for ships. The prices charged by far east supplie in years gone by cannot be explained by superi efficiency. In the more recent past, all shipbuilders ha suffered because of initial oversupply, followed by t combined effects in the 1980s of a downturn in world tra and an excess of ships. The prospects now are for a improvement in trade and in shipping rates and, at lo last, for an end to the life of ships that were built so cheap 20 to 25 years ago.

There is a price improvement in far east yards. T European industry, having rationalised, is catching up. W can probably see an end to contract-related production a within the lifetime of the seventh directive. If the ho Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) wishes to intervene am happy to give way to him now.

Mr. Frank Field: The Minister's introductory remar suggest that the Government went in to bat for changes the seventh directive. Logically, therefore, ought not invite the House not to accept it, so that his negotiati position is improved rather than weakened?

Mr. Leigh: I believe that the seventh directive is a improvement on the sixth directive. It is clearer. Given t worldwide improvement in shipbuilding prospects and t fact that we have gone through so much pain restructuring our industry, there is everything to be gain by working with our Community partners to get t seventh directive on the stocks. We have restructured o industry, having reached agreement with our Europea partners, and therefore we can look forward to a ro prospect for the shipbuilding industry. Nothing would gained by the House not agreeing to the seventh directiv

[Mr. Leigh]

As for other international negotiations that are taking place in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development in Paris to increase the powers of the revised general agreement on shipbuilding—the RGA—to which the United Kingdom is already a signatory, the increase in powers will seek to bring to an end all state aid for shipbuilding among all OECD members, including Korea, which joined specifically for these negotiations. Although there is no formal time limit, it is hoped to complete the OECD negotiations in 1991 with implementation in two to three years.

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): Can the Minister give the House any assurance that other countries will not use secretive means to continue to support their shipbuilding industries to the detriment of the United Kingdom and what remains of our limited industry in Northern Ireland?

Mr. Leigh: The hon. Gentleman has made his point. I do not think that he would expect me to comment on it in detail except to say that the European Commission keeps a close eye on what is going on. We keep a close eye on what is going on elsewhere in the Community and others keep a close eye on us. Within the terms of European aid and what is allowable in terms of subsidies to shipbuilding, the opportunities for cheating within the European Community are very slight, if not non-existent. However —I hope that the hon. Member for Antrim, East (Mr. Beggs) will accept this—having done so much to restructure our industry, surely it is in our interest to see subsidies phased out in an orderly and sustained way throughout the Community. If they are not phased out, we could be in even more difficulties in relation to competition with shipbuilders in southern Europe.

Mr. Robert Hughes *rose*——

Mr. Leigh: If the hon. Gentleman will allow me to make some progress, I shall give way to him with pleasure. I am anxious to be a servant of the House in these matters and I want to let hon. Members make their points.

I believe that such an agreement would be of great benefit to shipbuilding world wide. I heartily commend it to the House. The OECD negotiations are also relevant to the required duration of the seventh European shipbuilding directive—a contentious issue to which I shall return.

Three areas of contention are due to be discussed and, we hope, resolved at the Industry Council on 26 November to which I have referred—the duration of the directive, the extension of a transitional introductory period for Spain and whether a commitment to a progressive reduction in subsidy levels should be written into the text. Other areas that have proved contentious and where negotiated solutions are in sight are whether the directive should cover only new building or also—as in the sixth directive —ship conversion, a German request to exclude from the scope of the directive a proportion of the aid offered to ship owners, a tightening of the rules on investment aid and United Kingdom concern at the proposal that shipbuilding yards closed with closure aid could not be reopened without the Commission's prior approval. I shall discuss those in turn.

On the duration of the directive, article 11 proposes a two-year life for the directive and we support that. To do anything else would compromise the Community's negotiating stance in the OECD discussio subsidies from shipbuilding. A longer suggest to the other participants that the not take its proposal seriously. Italy, Sp Belgium have argued for a four-year peri Portugal have proposed three years, Denmark and the Netherlands would pre would settle for two. It is unlikely to be le for final settlement.

On the extension of the introductory p the Spanish have claimed that they have n time to rationalise their industry in requirements of the sixth directive. After i discussions, the European Commission authorities have produced a plan desig restructuring of the industry by the end o which will be strictly monitored by the C for aid to be provided for only one additi than the two years for which the plan is Given the efforts that we in the United made to rationalise our industry, I believ not support the Spanish request to the C

The Commission's original proposal i progressive reduction of aid ceilings was n the aid ceiling every year as at present, commitment to reduce it progressively ev more often if circumstances warrant Kingdom argued that changes in the sub be market led, based closely on surveys far east prices, as at present. In practica certain that demand will continue to in and that the gap between Community c prices will diminish during the life of the

The Commission has changed the redrafted article 4(3), returning to the ori the equivalent article in the sixth directiv mention a commitment to progresive red pro quo, it has insisted that article strengthened by a joint Commissio declaration in the minutes as follows:

"The Council and Commission Commission's assessment of the prevailing the cost structure of the most competitive and the prices charged by their m competitors will be solely based on an o analysis of the prevailing market situatio ceiling is set. A basic element of this assessm carried out by an independent consultancy market information."

That has the merit of removing the progressive reduction, no matter what, ceilings to the best possible information to no other considerations. Denmark, Netherlands believe progressive reduc ceilings to be politically important and wi Council. Those are the major areas of c

Mr. Jim Sillars (Glasgow, Govan): Is talking about a reduction in the aid ceili per cent.?

Mr. Leigh: Negotiations are in ha unwise for me to forecast their outco Gentleman is right that the present aid cent. A shrewd observer would conclu likely that it will be reduced, but not m cent. I shall not give any commitment Government.

Mr. Sillars: That is what the Minister wants.

Mr. Leigh: I am not giving any commitment on behalf of the Government, but negotiations are being conducted. As we have restructured our industry, it is in our interests that subsidies should be phased out in an orderly fashion. If they remain high, that can only benefit our competitors in southern European yards. The shipbuilding subsidy—the shipbuilders intervention fund, or SIF—will not be phased out entirely; that would take some years. I should be surprised if the subsidy remained as high as 20 per cent., but should be equally surprised if it were cut much below 10 per cent. That is a matter for negotiation.

Mr. Peter Robinson (Belfast, East): Will the Minister confirm that the United Kingdom's representative sought to have it reduced below 10 per cent.?

Mr. Leigh: I do not know where the hon. Gentleman gets that information from. He said that the United Kingdom's representative sought to have it reduced below 10 per cent. That is not my understanding of our negotiating position.

Ms. Joyce Quin (Gateshead, East): Surely the Minister owes it to the House to explain clearly the Government's position on the aid ceiling. What figure do they favour?

Mr. Leigh: It would do our negotiating position in Brussels no good if I were to tell the House exactly what we had proposed. I have been more than open with the House. I have explained that the present subsidy is 20 per cent. and have given a prognosis that it will undoubtedly be reduced. I do not know what it will be reduced to, because different countries have presented different proposals. It would be unwise and unhelpful if I were to suggest the outcome of the negotiations, because they are still proceeding. No doubt we shall find out what will happen on 26 November, which is not far away.

I have dealt with the major matters of contention. The remaining changes are all improvements to the sixth directive. The United Kingdom, supported by the Netherlands, Denmark and Germany, has questioned the coverage of the directive. We believe that ship conversions should not be eligible for subsidy. The United Kingdom does not at present provide subsidies for conversion and our shipbuilders have lost business to those European yards that do. A compromise has been suggested which would link support for conversion work to the level given for building ships. There is, of course, a higher level given for large ships, as the House will know. Other member states have agreed to the compromise so, reluctantly, we have had to follow, although we should have preferred abolition.

The German concern on the aid that they give to shipowners to purchase ships is that some of that aid is spent in foreign yards. They see it as unfair that all aid given via shipowners should be counted within the production aid ceiling. The United Kingdom gives all its contract-related production aid as defined in the directive directly to shipbuilders. This is the SIF, to which I referred and about which all hon. Members will, no doubt, have heard. It is an entirely transparent scheme.

Our other scheme, the home shipbuilders credit guarantee scheme, operates within the credit guidelines of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and outside the directive. We therefore have not offered support to the Germans in their effort an allowance for this wastage of aid and nor other states.

To prevent investment aid—either regional our case, closure aid—from being used to enlarg before markets have returned to normal, the amendment in article 6 is likely to be agreed:

"Investment aid, whether specific or non-specific be granted for the creation of a new shipyar investment in an existing yard unless it is lin restructuring plan which does not increase the shi capacity of that yard or unless it is linked dire corresponding reduction in capacity elsewhere in member state within the same period."

This should not cause the United Kingdom any because, while we have given closure aid, we hav rule that no selective assistance should be given t shipbuilding facilities in the present circumsta new article 6(1) has greater clarity than its prede the sixth directive and lays down conditions und investment aid could be given.

The United Kingdom does, however, ha concern about closure aid, and I know that this interest to certain hon. Members. We have co about the proposal in article 7, which would member state to obtain the Commission's prior to reopen any yard for which closure aid has be The yard would have to remain completely clos first five years and could reopen only with Co approval at any time after that. We have made it our concern focused on legal and practical difficu Commission has accepted our argument that yard closed for ever posed difficulties in land la difficult to place a binding covenant on a free most purchasers prefer to purchase a freeh Commission has therefore accepted an amendm original proposed article as follows:

"If, after a period of five years, but before anniversary of closure, a member state wishes neve reopen a closed shipbuilding or ship repair facilit obtain the Commission's prior approval."

Other member states have acquiesced to that am but would prefer closure to be permanent and ir without time limit.

We have separately questioned the Comm whether it would seek to apply this article retro on closures made under the sixth directive. Th take in closure of North East Shipbuilders' Sunderland, which is of particular interest Members. The Commission has argued in the working group that the new article 7 is more fle the equivalent article in the sixth directive, wh that closure after closure aid assistance must be and irreversible". The Council minutes for directive, which are not legally binding, said:

"genuine and irreversible closure"

should last for

"at least five years."

There was no support among other member stat notion that the new article would be retrospecti it applied to closures made under the sixth direct Commission already insists on closure for at years and will not even countenance preparations reopening for shipbuilding after that time. In p the amended article 7 is carried, the Commissio to treat closures under both the sixth and seventh as "genuine and irreversible", to be inflexible

[Mr. Leigh]

years, to show flexibility after five years and to lose interest after 10 years. It is a complex issue, but if one considers it in those terms, one can make sense of it.

Mr. Bob Clay (Sunderland, North): Having been through that complex matter, will the Minister accept that, on the interpretation he has just given the House, it boils down to the fact that the seventh directive will be more draconian on closures than the sixth directive was? If the sixth directive had remained as it was and if the North East Shipbuilders yards were still there, they could have reopened after five years, whereas now they will need the Commission's approval. That part of the directive is retrospective. Is the Minister asking the House to approve such retrospective legislation after all that the Government have said over the years about it?

Mr. Leigh: The hon. Gentleman asked whether the seventh directive is more draconian than the sixth directive. He cannot sustain that point, because the sixth directive says:

"closure after closure aid must be genuine and irreversible".

Nothing could be clearer. At least we are now moving towards a practical compromise. Closure aid is given for the obvious reason of trying to cut down general shipbuilding capacity. We are moving towards a generally understood position, with which I hope that we can all live. I know that the hon. Gentleman, whose diligence and skill in these matters we all admire, has his own problems in Sunderland. However, we can live with the proposition that the Commission will not countenance reopening in the first five years. It is prepared to be flexible between five and 10 years, and after 10 years it will lose interest. That seems to be a reasonably sensible middle way with which all countries are prepared to live.

Mr. Jim Cousins (Newcastle upon Tyne, Central): The Minister will realise that one of the tests of irreversibility advanced in the sixth and seventh directives is that no activity predicated on the basis of a return to shipbuilding within that period should be allowed. Can the Minister assure the House that construction work for the oil rig industry, which is a boom industry at present and which it is in the national interest to promote, will not be caught on the ground that such activity predicates a return to shipbuilding?

Mr. Leigh: Will the hon. Gentleman allow me to take some advice on that point? It is only fair that I should do so and I will come back to that point in my closing remarks. I should like to give as accurate an answer as possible.

The time limit of 10 years which we have obtained is the best deal that we are likely to achieve and I have no hesitation in commending it to the House.

The final area of interest in the seventh directive concerns the absorption of East German shipyards into the Community. Some weeks ago, the Commission published a proposed amendment to the directive giving special treatment to East German yards, similar to that accorded to Spain and to Portugal in the sixth directive. Officials on the Council working group were informed on 31 October 1990 by Commission officials that the amendment had been withdrawn because of the substantial orders available in the yards concerned. German officials have subsequently renewed a derogation as many of the orders w unconvertible roubles and will have to be Although the Council working group acc renegotiation of the contract may cause diffi former East German shipyards, it does no enough is yet known of the extent of the prol the provision of special treatment.

Adoption of the seventh directive on aid t will conclude a series of working group disc have been more protracted than expected giv of the sixth directive. Hon. Members will h but I have no hesitation in commending directive to the House.

10.59 pm

Ms. Joyce Quin (Gateshead, East): I an that the debate is taking place in ad forthcoming discussions in the Council although I strongly regret that the time avai a discussion of a complex and important issu

I welcome the new Minister to his new ap wish him well. It has to be said, however, been a kaleidoscope of 12 Secretaries of S and Industry over the past 11 years. We ha kaleidoscope of changing Ministers with res shipbuilding. Few have managed to get thei table before being moved on. I do not kn wish the current Minister a longer tenure in predecessors. Given the Government's overa seems rather unlikely that he will have that e fact that there have been so many Secretari Trade and Industry and so many M responsibility for shipbuilding shows that th have not taken the shipbuilding industry ser nor industry generally, over recent years.

The documents that we are consider proposed seventh directive on aid to th industry and the most recent of the period are prepared by the Community on th industry as a whole. It is clear that at long upturn in the industry, and we welcome th a long time coming and there are some un least the situation in the Gulf. On the whol think that it is a sustainable upturn. The DT subject expresses the view that at least the continue until the middle of the decade.

There will be a renewal of the world's a proportion of ships in that fleet that are mor old has increased to more than 63 per cent. the figure rises to a dramatic 73 per cent. T are worried that the prospects for Britain market—where there is the upturn I refer look good. We have already lost more shi than any other comparable EEC cou reduction in our share of world output has It decreased to about 1·5 per cent. in 198 declining.

I was surprised to hear the Minister say directive had successfully defended the arguable, although I should question that it has defended the position of EEC shipb world market, but it has not defended the shipbuilding within the European Commu the world as a whole. We have noticed t

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Conservative Members to think that shipbuilding is a declining industry and that that decline is inevitable. The attitude seems to be, "It is an old industry—let it go." That hardly squares with the fact that the world's No. 1 shipbuilder, which accounts for about 50 per cent. of world output, is Japan. Japan is hardly a backward or declining industrial nation.

There are many orders at present, but with the British capacity being so small it is unlikely that we shall be building a significant proportion of the ships that are on order. For example, only in the past few days orders have been announced by Malaysia and Abu Dhabi for liquefied natural gas carriers. The yards that seem likely to benefit are those either in Japan or possibly, in the European Community, in France. No British yards seem in line for the orders.

Events in the British shipbuilding industry have been especially tragic over the past two years. We have seen the closure of the Sunderland shipyards. The Southwick yard was one of the most modern of shipyards. Cammell Laird is experiencing difficulties on Merseyside. As a result of the downturn in warship building, it seems that the yard will have to look for merchant orders. Unfortunately, as has been made clear tonight by the Government, as on other occasions, it will have to seek those orders on an uneven playing field. Cammell Laird will not have access to the intervention fund from which competitor yards in Europe will benefit. That is a shame and something on which the Government should negotiate.

Discussions on European directives take a long time to complete and once they have been agreed they tend to be difficult to change. That certainly applied to the passage of the sixth directive. The Sunderland yards and the Cammell Laird yard have been the losers because it has been difficult to change the rules which were agreed at the time of the recession in shipbuilding and which are not suitable for the present upturn in the industry.

The Government have negotiated strongly with the Commission about the continuation of the Sunderland yards and about intervention funds for Cammell Laird and other yards. It is ironic that under the present Prime Minister the Government claim to be talking tough in Europe, but in reality they have been prepared to accept every minor and major interpretation of the shipbuilding rules by the Commission that has disadvantaged Britain. The Government have not challenged any of those rules.

The Government should be more open with the House and give us an assurance that secret agreements will not govern the conclusion of this directive, as was the case with the sixth shipbuilding directive. I am aware of what happened then as I was the shipbuilding spokesperson in the European Parliament when the sixth directive was agreed. We were amazed and dismayed to discover that, once the directive had been agreed, it was governed by an unpublished agreement of the Council of Ministers that had not been scrutinised by national Parliaments or by the European Parliament. That was deplorable and it should not be repeated.

I am sorry that the Minister could not be more frank about the level of aid that the Government are supporting in Brussels. While we do not want to undermine the negotiations, we should at least like to be assured that the Government are standing up for the British shipbuilding industry. That does not seem to be the case on the evidence presented to us tonight.

Mr. Chris Mullin (Sunderland, South): Th ments in relation to Sunderland appear to ha secret that the Secretary of State for Trade and the time did not know about them. He was publicly for bids for the yards that would n subsidy and when such a bid was forthcoming i vetoed on the ground that some arrangement, o was not aware at the time, had been agreed by his Department that forbade the bid going ahe

Ms. Quin: My hon. Friend has made a valid Government did not seem to understand wha agreed with the European Commission in Dece The murky details surrounding the Sunderlan have never been made public. Because the Gove not understand, would-be purchasers of the S yards who in some cases wanted to operate without subsidy were misled for a considera Their disappointment was acute when at the end they were told that they could not carry out sh on the Wear. The disappointment was also Sunderland and that feeling persists today.

The system of determining aid ceilings i directive is virtually unchanged from the syst sixth directive. We shall look closely at the position that the Government adopt next week ceiling. If we feel that the Government are arg lower ceiling than we approve of, we shall not make the matter public as loudly as we can an inform the industry and the people who work Government's attitude in those negotiations.

Mr. Leigh: What ceiling would the hon. La

Ms. Quin: I would desire a ceiling that was l the 11 per cent. for which the Government ap calling. There have been rumours that the G wanted an even lower ceiling. Eleven per cent. a halving of the present ceiling. That reductio drastic given the still precarious position in sh

We are concerned also—this point has bee briefings to hon. Members by the Ship Builder Repairers Association—because the costs opera yard, a Danish yard, have been the key elem Commission's proposals governing aid ceilings Builders and Ship Repairers Association feels th led to a distortion in the figure that has been p particular because the yard in question is Denmark's largest shipowner and the yard almost exclusively for its owner. Although D opposed to shipbuilding subsidies, it has one o most generous tax systems for investment I should like the Minister to respond to that sp because it is of considerable concern no Opposition Members but to the shipbuildin throughout the United Kingdom.

It is said that all aid will be included in the di certainly approve of transparency of aid, but there are some exceptions, including, in part given for investment and for research and de What use do the Government intend to make research and development, and do they intend research and development within our sh industry?

There are also exceptions for developmen documents accompanying the directive say tha in the European Community has overused tha

[Ms. Quin]

to its benefit. Perhaps the Minister can tell us which member state is referred to in that category and whether we have attempted to use development aid as one way of getting orders for our shipyards.

The Minister referred to the definition of a closure. The economic committee of the European Parliament has recommended that the period be reduced to three years and that that matter will be debated by the European Parliament. Why, in particular given the situation at the Sunderland yards and at Cammell Laird, are the Government not in favour of, perhaps, a three-year limit rather than the formula that the Minister gave, which represents little change from the terms of the sixth directive?

On Sunderland, is not it tragic that the equipment there has been dismantled in recent days and has made the site much more difficult for a resumption of shipbuilding, despite the fine and proud traditions in Sunderland and along the River Wear? I am sure that my hon. Friends will refer to that matter if the opportunity arises.

The principle of degressivity is referred to in the directive. Although people may say that it is a good idea to try to reduce the amount of aid that is being given, I should like to be assured by the Minister that the principle of degressivity will not override the reality of the situation in world shipbuilding. If it is clear that more aid needs to be given in European yards, the principle of degressivity should not override the need to give aid if the circumstances arise.

On the definition of ships under the directive, the Minister did not mention whether the Government had been arguing for the ships that Aluminium Shipbuilders want to build to be excluded from the directive. It seems astonishing that the previous Minister with responsibility for shipbuilding did not, in front of the European Commission, defend the need or the possibility for Aluminium Shipbuilders to build ships at Sunderland. The Government seem to have failed to take up the issue with the European Commission, and I should like to know whether the present Minister is to adopt a change of policy on that matter.

The Minister mentioned the special regime that will be offered to East German shipyards. The accession of East Germany into the Community will make a huge difference because, on its own, East Germany is the No. 2 shipbuilder in the European Community, and West Germany is the No. 1 shipbuilder, and combined they will be dominant in the Community shipbuilding industry. Although I can understand that the European Commission may worry about the ensuing capacity for the European Community as a whole, the British Government should be concerned at the huge contraction that has taken place in British shipbuilding and should be concerned to ensure that we do not suffer any further disadvantage.

It is important also to address the lack of monitoring of the rules. That has certainly been a problem under the sixth directive, and we want to make sure that action is taken under the seventh directive so that countries respect the rules. It is a great pity that respect for the rules has been so lax up to now because that has put our shipbuilding industry at a considerable disadvantage.

I refer to a related issue, which does not arise under the directive, but which is being considered in Brussels—the aid that is available to shipbuilding areas under the RENAVAL programme. The Government have been slow to act over RENAVAL and made a strange choice of areas to benefit from it at the beginning. The traditional shipbuilding areas, such as Strathclyde, Tyne and Wear and Merseyside, were given RENAVAL programmes much later. That is unacceptable because the money could have been put to good use earlier in those areas.

What is the Government's attitude towards the accompanying social measures, which, so far, have been blocked in the Council of Ministers? Are the Government in favour of reaching an agreement on the accompanying social measures that have been envisaged by the European Commission?

Shipbuilding in Britain has lived through tragic times in the past 11 years. Although some closures were inevitable, the scale of the decline was not. There are murky episodes, such as the agreement that closed the Sunderland shipyard.

I remind the Minister that shipbuilding is an industry with a future, and perhaps he should be reminded of a few simple facts. The majority of our trade is seaborne and will continue to be so—and the same is true of most of world trade. Both for reasons of obsolescence and because of poor environmental standards, many older vessels are likely to be scrapped or to be laid up in the next few years. I also remind the Minister of the clear links between the traditional industries, such as shipbuilding, and the products of the new technologies. These days, even the simplest fishing vessel is likely to have a range of technological gadgetry on board, Unfortunately, however, it is likely that at present neither the ships nor the technology on board will be British-built.

The Government need to work actively with the industry to win orders and require the determination to do so. We should look, for example, at the way in which the Japanese Government have worked with the Japanese industry on the promotion of collaborative research and development across that country's shipbuilding industry.

I was interested to read in *Lloyd's List* a few days ago about the work of the European shipyards in Spain, France, Germany and Italy, which are co-operating to develop anti-pollution and environmentally friendlier vessels. Again, it is a great pity that no British yard seems to be involved in the venture. A Labour Government would wish to work with the industry to promote research and development, to win new orders, and to promote a view of what the industry in Britain should be trying to achieve in future in terms of a market share both in the European Community and in the wider world.

In conclusion, the Government have sold the industry short. As a result, not only our shipbuilding industry but our general industrial future has been damaged. I urge the Minister to take a more positive view. From what we have heard tonight, that is unlikely to happen. Once again, it is the Labour party that is the party committed to industrial revival and to our future industrial prosperity.

11.18 pm

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): I am prompted to speak on the directive, not because the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster will be making an application for a grant following this evening's result or to repair the damage that has been done to the ship of state by the recent mutiny among the crew, but because this is a much more serious

issue. The shipbuilding industry in my constituency has recently suffered a setback as one island shipyard announced the redundancy of 20 workers at Souters the other day.

Despite that gloomy news, the shipbuilding intervention fund has been of exceptional assistance in bringing innovation and new manufacturing methods to our island shipyards. By judicious use of the grant, FBM Marine has designed and built a new high-speed ferry for service between Naples and Capri and has produced a revolutionary design for a catamaran to serve Madeira. That order was won against fierce competiton from Australia and Norway.

Perhaps the jewel in the crown is the order for the high-speed catamarans for Red Funnel to run between Cowes and Southampton. Associated British Ports—a privatisation success in itself—which is now the owner of Red Funnel, has placed the order with an island shipyard, FBM Marine. The order will replace the Italian manufactured hydrofoils. My hon. Friend the Minister may imagine my joy at an island community using island craftsmen to produce the fine new vessels, which will not only serve the people of the Isle of Wight but will be used as a shop window for all those who travel across the Solent to place valuable orders with us.

My hon. Friend's predecessor declared himself a friend of the grant. I am concerned that, having personally assisted island shipyards to obtain fresh funds totalling many hundreds of thousands of pounds, from the Department of Trade and Industry on no fewer than four occasions, all that may now be threatened. I pay tribute to the civil servants in my hon. Friend's Department, who have always dealt with me most efficiently and provided a very prompt service when I have had a tight deadline for obtaining an intervention fund for the island shipyards.

The Shipbuilders and Ship Repairers Association, to which the hon. Member for Gateshead, East (Ms. Quin) referred, and which represents a large proportion of the industry, wants certain points to be addressed. I ask my hon. Friend to comment on them when he replies to the debate. The report by Tecnecon to DGIV is dominated by one Danish yard. The Danes want to phase out subsidies as they aid the ship owner, not the builder. The abolition of shipbuilding subsidies will make no difference to Danish yards because they do not receive them now. However, the tax system for a Danish owner building a ship in a Danish yard produces the equivalent of a 30 per cent. subsidy on the price of the ship.

The association would like article 4(2) to be amended so that it reads, "competitive Community yards". For 1991, the responsible Commission directorate, DGIV, is proposing a ceiling of 11 per cent., with 9 per cent. for small ships. That is based on a study by United Kingdom consultants, Tecnecon, based on eight ship types. One Danish yard supplied data on five of the eight ship types. Each time its cost was lowest on one ship type by as much as one third, against two highly efficient German yards. I am sure that my hon. Friend does not need me to convince him that that is a serious position because it is hardly likely that German yards would be considered inefficient. That is the weight behind the proposed amendment, which would make the system more widely spread.

The association wants the resumption of degressivity qualified by a presumption that it should be the market that determines the level of aid. The wording of the seventh directive appears to prevent denationalised yards from applying for grant, which could be prejudicial. Article 4(3) should be amended to prevent those yards with a full order book from being penalised by the three-year rule. I am sure that my hon. Friend will accept that the more successful yards will need a longer time before they can begin building, so it would be wrong if they lost grant because of that.

I know that my hon. Friend has a reputation for being something of an interventionist. Indeed, I believe that it is an open secret that, before gaining his exalted position, he regularly intervened in the affairs of the Labour party, and today he may even have intervened in Room 12 on behalf of our right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. I am sure that he would like some reassurance from me about the self-help on the island. Through the excellent offices of the chief executive of the British Marine Industries Federation, Paul Wagstaff, the Isle of Wight has received a grant from the BMIF to study the shipyards and the related industries on the island, in advance of our training and enterprise council launch, to identify the future strengths and highlight the weaknesses of the island's marine industries. It is the only study of its kind in the United Kingdom.

My hon. Friend already enjoys a reputation as one of the statesmen of the House. I am sure that we can rely on his considerable multilingual skills as well as his well-known Anglo-Saxon wit to ensure that the interests of British shipyards and ship repairing are properly defended in the EC and that the directive is suitably amended.

11.24 pm

Mr. Bob Clay (Sunderland, North): I do not want to be sectarian, but the Government's attitude to what is happening to German shipbuilding is extraordinary.

The seventh directive will come into effect on 1 January, but for the past few months no restraint has been imposed on the activities between the former East and West German shipyards. West German shipbuilders have been buying into East Germany and work has been subcontracted backwards and forwards. It is clear that the West German Government tore up the existing sixth directive several months ago. Now they have the audacity to suggest that Germany should be allowed to derogate from the new directive and that all sorts of special arrangements should be made. It is now reported that the West German shipbuilding industry wants to put DM6 billion of restructuring money into the East German yards. Therefore, the country that already had the largest capacity by far in the Community now has more than doubled that capacity by adding a whole range of quite good but cheap labour shipyards to its capacity. The British Government have made no complaint and just sat there. I should not object so much to that if it were not for the fact that, in the meantime, they allowed Sir Leon Brittan and the Commission to nit-pick in a most ludicrous fashion about the reopening of British yards. I should have thought that the Government had learnt their lesson by now.

The Minister's comments on the background to the directive contradict its contents. He spoke about how the market is picking up and how prices are improving, but all his predecessors told us that the market was hopeless. The Opposition argued that the industry should be supported because there would be an upturn in the market, but the Government refused to accept that. They let good British

[Mr. Bob Clay]

yards close, but now the upturn has arrived, they allow the Commission to keep those yards closed. That is a shameful record.

The nit-picking about Sunderland—I make no apology for mentioning it—is appalling. For the first time on record the Minister mentioned the problem that the Government face, about how one can keep yards closed for ever as well as the problems connected with the freehold of such yards. We are now learning what happens when someone buys a shipyard to use for some other purpose because it is not allowed to reopen as a shipyard. There are many problems arising from covenants and lease conditions. That buyer would face even more difficulties should he wish to resell the yard to another owner. That buyer would then have to impose all the covenants and legal restrictions imposed upon him by the Department of Trade and Industry on that next buyer. Even after a few days in office, the Minister is aware of the nightmare that now faces the Government and the Commission as a result.

It is a fundamental irony that the sixth directive, which was intended to reduce subsidy and to protect the best of the European shipbuilding industry, whether we agreed with it or not, is now operating to prevent the reopening or continued existence of the most modern merchant yards in Europe at Sunderland. Under the Government's privatisation proposals people were prepared to buy those yards at a commercial price and operate them without any subsidy. However, a directive that was designed to reduce subsidy has been used to prevent modern shipyards in Britain operating without subsidy. That turns the logic of the directive on its head. That has happened not only in Sunderland but, for example, at La Ciotat in France, where a Swedish-American company said, in effect, "We shall take the yard over, pay for it and build tankers without subsidy," only to be told that it could not do so because the Commission obliged the French Government to oppose it.

That happened because the Commission became so obsessed with recession mentality—with cutting and restricting capacity—that when the upturn in the market came and European yards could start taking advantage of the situation, expanding the industry a little, the Commission's actions effectively prevented any forward movement occurring.

In Sunderland we have ended up in a truly extraordinary situation. I do not have time to relate the nonsense of what has happened. It would be a farce if it were not so tragic. People say, "We shall move the equipment out of yards that have been closed and put it in another site on the river and try to build ships there." Sir Leon Brittan replies, "No, you cannot do that." We have never been told whether only the NESL—North Eastern Shipbuilders Ltd.—yards were closed or whether there is a bar on shipbuilding along the whole of the River Wear. If the latter, may we be told why, and, if so, by what law?

One bureaucratic nonsense leads to another. It seems clear that Ministers at the Department of Trade and Industry did not even understand what the people in Brussels were telling them, and vice versa. Consider the farcical situation involving the small, successful and unique British company, Aluminium Shipbuilders Ltd., the only European licence holders for the most successful aluminium hulled, jet foil designed catamaran in the world. The company needs to move from its present premises in the south of England, because they are too small, and says that there is only one suitable place in Britain where it can go, and that is Sunderland, where there is available the only covered berth large enough for its activities. We are speaking of only a tiny proportion of the total NESL yards, but even that move is not allowed.

I cannot believe that, when the sixth directive was drafted, the bureaucrats who drafted it and Ministers who agreed to it thought that it would cover a different type of vessel, including the type of catamaran to which I referred. Such vessels were not invented when that directive was drafted. But because the document refers, in its bureaucratic language, to metal hulled, ocean-going vessels, Aluminium Shipbuilders Ltd. cannot, even without subsidy, relocate in an empty yard in Sunderland, where 400 high-tech jobs would be created. Instead, the firm is having to consider going outside the United Kingdom. What a disgraceful state of affairs.

The Government have yet to explain the real nature of the secret agreement that has led to the most modern shipyards in Europe being dismantled. There may be 20 small yards in Britain capable of building ships of up to 1,000 tonnes, but that does not mean that one of them can build a ship of 10,000 tonnes.

Even if the Government came to their senses and allowed intervention funds for Cammell Laird and Swan Hunter, the result would still be that only Cammell Laird, Swan Hunter, Govan and Harland and Wolff would be capable of building ships in Britain of over 10,000 tonnes. What an extraordinary state of affairs. With the market in its present state, British ship owners—who should have been more loyal in the past to our yards—as they come to their senses and as prices begin to rise, will be obliged to order abroad because there will not be the capacity in Britain to handle the orders. It is shameful and, even at this stage, the Government should come to their senses.

11.34 pm

Mr. Peter Robinson (Belfast, East): I intend to make only the briefest of contributions so that I do not keep anyone else from making their comments on the seventh directive. It is easy for me to do that because, by and large, the comments made by the hon. Members for Gateshead, East (Ms. Quin) and for Sunderland, North (Mr. Clay) are ones with which I can easily concur. That allows me to concentrate solely on that part of the directive relating most closely to an issue involving Harland and Wolff which one might expect me, as the hon. Member for Belfast, East, to have as my angle of vision—what the Minister called the levels.

There may be some misapprehension about that because we are talking about mandatory limits. The levels can be anything under those limits. I was shocked at the Minister's attitude, because I know that the Commission's present reference involves 11 per cent., whereas the officials from the Department of Trade and Industry went into negotiations, trying to bring down the level to less than 10 per cent. The Minister chided the hon. Member for Gateshead, East by saying that he cannot give away any figures because that might prejudice negotiations. Is he trying to negotiate the percentage up or down? I suspect that he is trying to negotiate it down. If he does that, it will have a catastrophic effect on shipbuilding in Belfast.

The Government, through the House, pushed the issue of the privatisation of Harland and Wolff. I was not enthusiastic about it, as the Minister will see if he looks at the debates. But his colleagues pushed the legislation through the House and set up a privatised yard in Belfast. It seems the strangest of logic to attempt to damage the incubation period of that new yard by making it more difficult for it to make a profit.

The Minister will be well aware that a percentage point of subsidy can make a world of difference in terms of whether an order costs a yard money or it will clean its nose on it. The Minister should be in there, helping. I thought that the Tory attitude was that they should battle for Britain. That attitude has not been displayed during the Minister's comments in this debate. I want the Minister to say that he will enter negotiations on the basis of attempting to increase the percentage figure. He should remember that, if he does increase it, it will not bind him to anything, because he can later agree a smaller subsidy.

Most of the arrangements have worked to the advantage of the Danes who, through their system, are able to give a tax advantage of about 30 per cent. subsidy to their shipowners and shipbuilders. The Minister is doing down British shipbuilding and giving the Danes the advantage by not giving a proper and decent subsidy to the European yards. Many of the shipyards in the United Kingdom accept that the subsidy will go, indeed, some of them argue that it should go. But they want it to go in an orderly fashion. No one could contend that cutting it from its present level of 20 per cent. to about 10 or 11 per cent. is orderly.

We are looking to the Minister to fight for Britain on this issue, increase the level of subsidy and ensure that he does not strangle at birth the privatised Harland and Wolff company.

11.38 pm

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): Much has changed since we debated the sixth directive in 1986 and we have moved out of the recession in shipbuilding to a period of significant improvement. It is not clear whether that improvement will be sustained. However, it seems that European policy, originally directed towards reducing capacity, is in danger of becoming a policy against competition and the existence of a free and competitive industry. The Government must address that issue in their negotiations.

Nowhere is that fact more apparent than in the Sunderland yards, and the whole sorry story of Sunderland—a tale full of misleading information, misunderstanding, misdirection and, in the case of Sir Leon Brittan, even self-misdirection. It seemed that Sir Leon was suggesting not only that there was a limitation on the ability of the yards to reopen, but that even when the period came in which permission could be sought for the yards to reopen he was not ready to consider it. That was certainly the impression that he eventually managed to convey to Ministers, who at first failed to understand what he was on about.

As a result of all this, yards that could have been competitive have been murdered by policies which were misapplied and, it is now clear, misunderstood at several stages by some of the people who were supposed to be applying them. Some of that sorry tale was unveiled by the hon. Member for Sunderland, North (Mr. Clay) and we in the north-east know how many more such sorry tales there are and what a miserable saga it is.

Even at this late stage the Government should unravel the mess that has surrounded the Sunderland yards, and ensure that the right of trades people of Sunderland to exercise their skills in a competitive shipbuilding market is not permanently removed. Many hon. Members, when the Sunderland yards were first threatened, said that these were the very yards that could be competitive in the future if they could only get through the following 12 or 18 months. What has happened since then has vindicated what they said.

Secondly, we need a genuinely level playing field across Europe, across the world shipbuilding industry and within the United Kingdom. We do not have one now. Swan Hunter faces, and has succeeded in the face of, unequal competition, because it, like Cammel Laird, has been excluded from the benefits of the intervention fund. There is no level playing field because a number of companies, due to an accident of United Kingdom history, are excluded from those benefits.

As the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) pointed out, the situation has changed dramatically. The bringing into the ambit of this policy of shipyards employing 44,000 people in East Germany makes such a dramatic difference that the Community cannot stand on the arguments that originally led to the creation of the limits. The Government, therefore, have a perfect basis for renegotiation of the provisions so that there is a genuine level playing field and so that intervention fund assistance is available. Swan Hunter has done remarkably well in spite of the absence of that assistance and has been a successful candidate for a management buy-out.

I pay tribute to what has been done in that yard and I look forward to much success for it in future, but the essence of the Government's stance must surely be the securing of equal competitive terms for firms throughout the United Kingdom, across the Community and ultimately throughout the world. It does not make sense for the market in shipbuilding to be hopelessly distorted by massive subsidies. We should have fair competition, and policies should be directed towards securing it.

11.42 pm

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): What an irony——

Mr. Ken Maginnis (Fermanagh and South Tyrone): An irony indeed!

Mr. Field: We both have shipyards in our constituencies and the fewer interventions there are, the quicker hon. Members will be able to make their speeches. Northern Ireland Members are over-represented in this House, and an hon. Member from Merseyside has the Floor.

As I was saying, what an irony it is that for weeks we have witnessed Conservative Members destroying a Prime Minister who takes what I believe is a correct stance on Europe. Within the Community, each country must defend its national interests. Tonight we debate a document which, if passed, will lock our shipyards into further decline. We should not pass it unless the Minister explains what he means about the exceptional circumstances of British yards, and then writes that into the order.

Exceptional circumstances derive partly from the higher proportion of national income that we used to give

[Mr. Field]

to defence. It is now being pushed down towards the European average. Part of that defence budget was spent on naval shipbuilding. The labour force in the naval shipyards will soon be reduced from more than 22,000 to about 8,000. If the Government take no action, that will mean massive redundancies on the Clyde, in Tyneside, in Barrow and in Merseyside, and a lack of job opportunities in Northern Ireland.

If the readjustment to a normal defence programme does not constitute exceptional circumstances, I would like to know what does. As we were so dependent on naval orders when we were at the bottom of the recession, many of the yards moved over to naval work; it was all the work that there was. The expectation was that after the recession they would be able to move back to merchant shipping work. Shipyards that can take merchant work are beginning to fill up. Yards that could benefit from merchant work are locked into naval work, unless the Government defend British interests.

Unless the Minister is prepared to say that there are exceptional circumstances in this country, the House ought not to agree to the directive without voting upon it. It will result in many workers in many shipyards going down the road towards unemployment.

11.45 pm

Mr. Ken Maginnis (Fermanagh and South Tyrone): For those of us who are concerned for the future of this industry and who take albeit a passing interest in marine affairs, a crucial issue is the annual review by the competition policy directorate of the Commission when the market-driven basis for fixing the level of intervention funding for new ships is decided. This attempt to quantify the lowest far east price compared with the lowest European production cost has now been carried out and tabled by the consultants.

Those directly involved have suggested to me that there are, inevitably, weaknesses and inconsistencies within the current study. This year's study was, for example, carried out prior to the Gulf crisis which has had a negative impact on shipping freight rates. This, in turn, has caused a fall in the value of ships, which could ultimately affect new-build prices. I understand that the Commission will, after consulting member states, be bringing its recommendation on the level of aid for 1991 to the Council of Ministers towards the end of this month.

Having taken account of the current unsettled state of shipping and the new-build market, it appears that, apart from Denmark, and perhaps Holland, there is strong support in Europe for the idea of maintaining the current level of 20 per cent. aid for a further six months at least. Depending on the Gulf crisis, it should then be possible to carry out a further review, with the objective of reducing subsidy in a market which, I hope, would have stabilised, but it is my understanding that the United Kingdom Government have not, in line with the majority of member states, taken this sensible and pragmatic view of the situation. Rather, they appear to support a figure closer to, if not below, 10 per cent.

Given the uncertainty of the market and the difficulties in exactly defining the price-cost differential between far eastern and European yards, would not the Governmen be wiser to show greater flexibility by agreeing, for anothe six months, to the present level of intervention funding

Recovery is still a fragile path for our shipbuilders, bu they are striving with determination and are making a effort of which we in this House and the nation should b proud. Their effort must not be undermined. They requir consideration, understanding and support, not indiffe ence. That is particularly important in the Unite Kingdom context. A sensible level of intervention fundin for 1991 will be vital to the two most recently privatise major yards, Kvaerner-Govan in Glasgow and Harlan and Wolff in Belfast. The House will recall that the latte was bought from the Government just over a year ag through a management-worker buy-out.

Significant progress is now being made, after all th painful reconstruction that Harland and Wolff ha undergone over recent years. It would be wrong if it, an Kvaerner-Govan, were not to have the benefit of committed and involved Government approach. Surely is obvious that there are both regional and nation benefits to be achieved by this nation aligning itself wit the majority of European Governments and supporting realistic level of intervention funding that would help t ensure the winning of new orders for the United Kingdo yards in 1991.

11.50 pm

Mr. Jim Sillars (Glasgow, Govan): As hon. Member contributions have demonstrated, this is not a theoretic argument. It is about real people and the impact upon re jobs in our communities. I represent the constituenc containing Kvaerner-Govan. It employs a core group 1,600 men and women and is up to about 2,000 at presen It makes a £35 million plus contribution to the loc economy and is engaged in an investment programme 26 million to improve the yard's productivity. Howeve if faces severe difficulties in adjusting from our histori past to the present and moving to a future where it ca compete at an international level with anyone in the worl Given time, the management and the workers could do s

The managers and trade unions at Kvaerner disput —I join them in this—the rosy view of the worl shipbuilding industry presented by the Minister and th Commission. On page 8 the Commission's consultativ document talks about the situation in the shipbuildin industry. It says that the

"recession . . . may be slowly coming to an end".

It goes on to say:

"all aspects of the situation improved . . .these developmen if sustained—may lead to a situation where competitio distorting measures can be eliminated."

That comment is laced with qualifications such as "may" "perhaps" and "if".

I have a letter from the managing director of Kvaern —Govan. It says:

"I can also divulge to you that, as a result of the Gulf crisi several shipowners have postponed discussions with us o new contracts until the market situation is clarified. Th customer for our last LPG tanker order recently decided n to make use of an option we had agreed for an additional shi again because of uncertainties arising out of the Middle Ea situation."

In other words, until the crisis is over, the market is fla

What concerns people in Kvaerner and other parts the country is the role of the Commission under th seventh directive. My information—I am certain that it

accurate—is that the Commission's proposal is to move from a ceiling level of 20 per cent. to 11 per cent. Disgracefully, in the negotiations the Department of Trade and Industry has been talking about 10 per cent. or lower. The last time there was a precipitate change in the level of aid from 26 per cent. to 20 per cent. Kvaerner lost two ships. Given the current margins, a drop from 20 per cent. to 11 per cent. or 10 per cent. will be a severe handicap in the competitive international world.

I want to lend my weight, for what it is worth, to what was said by the hon. Member for Gateshead, East (Ms. Quin) in respect of the Commission's so-called study, which builds up to the argument about the correct ceiling level for aid. It is a deeply flawed study, particularly when five of the eight ship types are taken from a single yard in Denmark, with a tax regime that is heavily weighted and is probably worth a subsidy of about 30 per cent. The Minister asked the hon. Member for Gateshead, East what level of ceiling aid she wanted. I can tell him what I want. I want 18 per cent. That is a reasonable position for yards such as Kvaerner to be in now. That is what we want from the Department of Trade and Industry in its discussions with the Commission.

11.52 pm

Mr. Leigh: I am grateful to be given an opportunity to try to reply to some of the many interesting points that have been made in the debate. Having spent nearly eight years on the Back Benches, I have always wondered at Ministers who come to the House with prepared texts. I have always thought that it would be far more impressive if they tried to reply to the points raised. I am not sure that I will succeed in doing that, but I will do my best.

The first question to me came from the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central (Mr. Cousins), who asked whether work on the oil rig industry will be allowed. The answer is yes. The Commission has said that it will not allow operations predicated upon a return to shipbuilding. If a project is viable without necessitating a return to shipbuilding it is okay with the Commission. Work for the oil rig industry is not regarded as shipbuilding in general, so it is not caught by the directive. I hope that that answers the hon. Gentleman's point.

The hon. Member for Gateshead, East (Ms. Quin) asked many questions, as is her right. I have little time, but I shall try to answer as many as I can. The first concerned that appalling word "degressivity". I made it clear in opening that the directive would not require automatic degressivity. Any change will be based on objective criteria after inquiry by consultants.

The hon. Lady and the hon. Member for Sunderland, North (Mr. Clay) asked about the treatment of East German yards. Whether we like it or not, those yards are part of the European Community—*[Interruption.]* So are our yards, as we fully accept.

I failed to mention earlier that the German Government have been undecided about special treatment under operating aid. They have changed their mind twice already, and at present are asking for special treatment. I make it absolutely clear that we shall oppose it. We expect a major restructuring programme. The Germans have big problems, but we shall scrutinise the Commission's treatment of the problem and the degree and rate of restructuring of the yards. Far from our being complacent, I hope that the hon. Member for Sunderland, North will accept that we take a robust view.

The hon. Member for Gateshead, East asked about research and development training. R and D in shipbuilding and marine engineering is supported by the Government through our "Wealth From the Oceans" collaborative R and D programme. We also support the Eureka programe, Euromar and the Community's Mast and Euram programmes.

The hon. Lady asked about RENAVAL. Approval of RENAVAL programmes for Plymouth, Tyne and Wear and Teesside are expected from the Commission this year. RENAVAL programme applications should be ready to go to the Commission for eligible parts of Fife, Strathclyde and Merseyside. I much regret, however, that in calculating REVANAL grants the Commission is proposing not to take account of job losses suffered in 1990. This week, I asked Commissioner Millan in a letter to reconsider that, but I have not yet received a reply.

The hon. Member for Gateshead, East mentioned Aluminium Shipbuilders Ltd. There is no prospect of excluding aluminium ships from the seventh directive. Their inclusion has been checked. The only reason for excluding them would be so that ASL could build at Southwick. The motion to exclude aluminium ships was defeated in the European Parliament following a proposal from a Labour Member of the European Parliament.

The hon. Member for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson) made some points. Let me make it clear that officials acting on my behalf did not seek a ceiling of less than 10 per cent. It is true that our aim is to reduce aid ceilings, but that is for negotiation. One does not necessarily begin negotiating at the level one expects to end up with. We must balance the much higher suggestions from the southern member states. I am not in a position to give the House the outcome of those negotiations.

I thank my hon. Friend the Member for the Isle of Wight (Mr. Field) for the kind remarks that he made about me. He centred his remarks on the Danish yards. The Commission's proposal was not based on prices quoted by one Danish yard. It took account of prices from a range of yards in different member states. Danish ship owners receive tax support, but it is not as high as 30 per cent. Production aid in Denmark is monitored by the Commission and converted to grant equivalent. If hon. Members, including my hon. Friend the Member for the Isle of Wight, have evidence that the Commission or those who advise me are missing something, we should be pleased to pass it on to the Commission.

The hon. Member for Sunderland, North (Mr. Clay) made some points. Sunderland yards were not sold because nobody wanted to buy them. They were given closure aid and could not reopen without returning that aid. Many of the difficult negotiations with the Commission have been necessary because the hon. Member and others have tried to wheedle their way around the clear ground rules, which were laid down from the beginning. Many of us admire the diligent work that the hon. Gentleman has done on behalf of his constituents, but those ground rules were laid down clearly and nothing that we could have done would have overcome them.

Mr. Clay: The hon. Gentleman said that I was trying to wheedle my way around the rules, yet six months after the closure one of his predecessors, the right hon. Member for

[Mr. Clay]

Braintree (Mr. Newton), argued in Brussels for a reopening of shipbuilding in Sunderland and was told by the Commissioner that that was not on and that he should have known that over the previous six months. That is a fact.

Mr. Leigh: The fact is that this story of NESL has gone on for a long time. A closure package has been agreed. Some £250 million of taxpayers' money has been sunk into this shipyard. The Government have done everything they can to keep shipbuilding going in Sunderland, but it has not been possible to keep it going. The saga has continued. It has weaved around and around as the hon. Member for Sunderland, North has refused to accept the economic facts of life.

We must accept that, despite our best efforts, shipbuilding will not return to Sunderland. With the help of closure aid, we have achieved a first-rate package for Sunderland. Sunderland needs to look to the future, not always to the past, as the hon. Gentleman does in his obsessions. We have a first-rate package which will ensure that we get a wide range of opportunities and jobs for Sunderland——

It being one and a half hours after the commencement of proceedings on the motion, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business).*

Question put:-

The House divided: Ayes 103, Noes 43.

Division No. 8] **[12.01 am**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bowis, John
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Carrington, Matthew
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dunn, Bob
Dykes, Hugh
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Franks, Cecil
French, Douglas
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Lang, Ian
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lord, Michael
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Neale, Gerrard
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunto*
Norris, Steve
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Raffan, Keith
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Sir Wyn *(Conwy)*
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood*
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thurnham, Peter
Tredinnick, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Widdecombe, Ann
Young, Sir George *(Acto*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Tom Sackville and
Mr. Timothy Wood.

NOES

Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Benton, Joseph
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Dixon, Don
Doran, Frank
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Henderson, Doug
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Ingram, Adam
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Lewis, Terry
McAvoy, Thomas
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
Maginnis, Ken
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester*
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield He*
Mullin, Chris
Patchett, Terry
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Quin, Ms Joyce
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast*
Sillars, Jim
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam*
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Taylor, Rt Hon J. D. *(S'fo*
Trimble, David
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wallace, James
Welsh, Michael *(Doncast*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Field and
Mr. William Ross.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House takes note of European Comm Document No. 8097/90 relating to aid for shipbuildin supports the Government's intention to agree to the ad of this Directive as a further step towards establis soundly based shipbuilding industry in the Eu Community.

Midland Railway (Electrification)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Greg Knight.]*

12.14 am

Mr. Keith Vaz (Leicester, East): I am grateful for the opportunity to raise this important matter in the House. I understand that this is the first time that the issue has been debated in this place, and I want at the outset to recognise the work of several individuals in Leicestershire who have campaigned on the subject. They are: councillor David Radford of Leicestershire county council; Mr. James Holden, who is an officer of the county council; councillor Henry Dumphy of Leicester city council; and Mr. John Armstrong of the Railway Development Society. I thank the Minister for his attendance and I hope that he, as an east midlands Member, will demonstrate a little regional pride this evening.

The midland main railway line links Sheffield, Nottingham, Derby and Leicester with London. It is electrified as far as Bedford for suburban services. The InterCity services are operated by diesel InterCity 125 trains half hourly to Leicester and hourly north of there. The line serves one of the largest populations of any line in the country and it is profitable. In 1988 it carried 5·8 million passengers, including myself.

Train services have improved in recent years. Average journey speeds from Leicester to London rose from 55 mph to 72 mph between 1980 and 1988. However, the midland main line has suffered for many years from under-investment. The parallel east coast and west coast main lines are electrified while the midland line is not. The west coast line is to have a further £750 million spent on upgrading. What appeared to be a commitment in the early 1980s to the electrification of the midland main line has been abandoned.

In 1988, concerned at the lack of plans for the line, a consortium was formed comprising the major local authorities that it serves: Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Northamptonshire and Nottinghamshire county councils and Sheffield city council. They commissioned consultants to investigate investment options for the line. The campaign for electrification based on the results of the study was launched in April 1990.

Fast high quality trains are not good in themselves, but they stimulate the economy that they serve by providing a vital communication link. The regions rely on good transport to be competitive. With the single European market and the channel tunnel, distances become greater and good transport even more important. There is strong evidence across Europe of a link between high quality train services and economic prosperity.

Places north and west of London will lie at the edge of the European market, even after the channel tunnel opens. To compete effectively, Leicester and the east midlands need excellent transport links, both passenger and freight. The lack of international rail services will fail to enhance our competiveness when the opportunities will be greatest.

The east midlands will have the largest population in the country with no direct European services. Potentially, one could travel from Leicester, Derby or Nottingham to Paris or Brussels in four hours via the tunnel.

Electric trains are better than diesels at delivering economic development benefits. All new high-speed services are electric, not diesel. Electric trains can be faste and quieter than diesels, and the mere act of putting up th wires shows a commitment to the service.

The consultants estimated that 3,500 jobs could b created in the region as a direct result of electrification, 80 of those jobs being in Leicestershire. That will come fro business relocating there and also expanding. In the longe term, the numbers could be greater than that. Midlan electrification is vital to secure the economic prosperity the region.

Investment of only £5·5 million in the track would brin big journey time savings—up to 20 minutes off th Sheffield to London journey, and 74 miles could be cleare for 110 mph travel and 22 miles could be cleared fo 125 mph travel. Investment of just £95 million woul complete electrification of the line from Bedford t Sheffield, and a further £48 million would equip it with th most up-to-date electric locomotives and coaches. Th total cost of £150 million is nothing compared with wha is being spent elsewhere.

As the Minister knows, Government rules demand tha British Rail investment makes an 8 per cent. real return o capital. The consultants have demonstrated in their repor a copy of which was handed to the Minister of State at m meeting with him earlier this year, that midlan electrification meets that target. Electrification, therefor is profitable.

Investment in new roads is appraised using cost benef analysis, which gives financial values to savings travellers' time and fewer accidents, but inter-city ra investment is judged only in pure financial terms, so th benefits of electrification in strengthening the region economy and helping to relieve congestion on the parall M1, probably the busiest road in the country, cannot b counted. A growing body of opinion says that publ transport and road building schemes should all b appraised even-handedly using cost-benefit analysis. they were, midland electrification, with its larg cost-benefit return, would have a high priority.

Electrification is also the green option. Trains can mak a major contribution to an environmentally responsib transport strategy. Fast, high-quality passenger trai services attract many of their customers from car users. midland main line services are improved, many ne passengers will leave their cars at home and travel by trai instead. That transfer from road to rail makes a re contribution to reducing environmental problems.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): There heavy road and rail congestion in the east midlands durin peak times. In my constituency, where the east midland line passes through, and in the southern area there is grea road congestion. In the northern area, from Dronfield t Sheffield, there is also considerable congestion. If th electrification for which my hon. Friend asks takes plac it will help to deal with road and rail problems. There considerable congestion at peak hours in Leicester, in m hon. Friend's constituency, which would be overcome to large extent by the electrification developments that he stressing.

Mr. Vaz: My hon. Friend is quite right. Our roads ar already congested. Instead of proposals for private roa and extra lanes on motorways, let us save some mone lives and injuries and spend more money on our publ transport system.

[Mr. Vaz]

I now refer to the two advantages of using trains as opposed to cars in the environmental strategy. First, trains use less than half the fuel that cars use per person carried, so total consumption of non-renewable resources will be less. Secondly, because trains use less fuel, they also produce smaller amounts of the polluting exhaust gases that threaten the ozone layer.

If the Minister tells us that he is not prepared to make a commitment to this proposal today, and if the line is not electrified, the present trains will be worn out by the turn of the century. They are already 15 years old. Nearly all other high-speed lines are electric, so there is little prospect of replacement diesel trains of the speed and quality necessary to remain competitive. The fear is that a service of declining quality could eventually be truncated at Leicester, with Leicester served by slower, outer-suburban trains, and Derby, Nottingham and Sheffield being served by branch lines off other main lines. We do not want to be left behind as also-rans as we have been in the past. We will not accept everyone else's cast-offs.

The campaign has cross-party support. It has the support of all the region's Members of this Parliament and its Members of the European Parliament, including my own MEP, Imelda Read, who is to raise this matter in the European Parliament. It also has the support of the district and county councils, trade unions, chambers of commerce and other bodies. I have agreed that the hon. Member for Bosworth (Mr. Tredinnick), who is in his place, should speak briefly when I have finished. I shall be joining him at a meeting at 9.15 am tomorrow at the Department when we shall continue to raise this issue.

We want some positive comments from the Minister tonight. We want three basic commitments. First, we want a commitment to electrification. Electrification has a long lead time—about seven years. We need a commitment to that investment now so that it can be completed before the turn of the century.

Secondly, we want the Government to insist that British Rail InterCity quickly employs resources to research the case for midland electrification. We estimate that it will take no more than six months to do that because most of the heavy work has already been done by the consultants.

Thirdly, we need the Government's assurance that midland electrification will not be delayed by the limits on British Rail's borrowing powers. Easing those constraints could bring electrification much sooner.

I urge the Minister to set a more positive climate in which British Rail InterCity can work by taking this opportunity to endorse the benefits, both economic and environmental, of having a high-speed, high-quality electrified network of InterCity services and setting a target for its achievement. This is not just a regional matter. The economic and commercial potential for cities such as Leicester and the east midlands region as a whole is so great that the whole country must share this concern. I urge the Minister just to say "Yes".

12.26 am

Mr. David Tredinnick (Bosworth): I thank the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) for making time available to me this evening. I also thank my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary for agreeing to meet a delegation of Leicestershire Members tomorrow to discuss the specific problem. That demonstrates that the Governme about this issue and that they recognise the concer county. I am sure that the fact that we are mee Minister tomorrow will be widely welcomed constituents.

I have argued long and hard, since my electio House, for the electrification of the midland mai believe that the future prosperity of the midlan especially of Leicestershire, including Leicest Hinckley, depend in the long term on the electri project. Given the £750 million that has been inv the west coast main line, the £1 billion on the A1 multi-million pound investment on the M1, i reasonable for the £160 million proposed investme midland main line to proceed. However, if tha possible, a good second option would be to elec line from Bedford to the city of Leicester. A thir which my hon. Friend the Minister might consi which has already been referred to, is to encourag Rail to spend £5 million to cut the rail journey ti Leicester to London by 10 minutes. I understand t would mean removing the curves at Harboro Wellingborough.

I ask my hon. Friend one question: does Brit need permission from the Department of Trans spend that money? Can he answer that question?

12.28 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of St Transport (Mr. Patrick McLoughlin): I congratu hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) on this debate on the electrification of British Rail's main line. I am pleased that I am also joined on th Bench by my hon. Friends the Members for S Hallam (Mr. Patnick) and for Derby, North (Mr. That shows the importance that is felt cross-part this issue. I note that my hon. Friend the Mem Hallam is the only Sheffield Member who is prese grateful for the contribution made by my hon. Fr Member for Bosworth (Mr. Tredinnick) and presence of the hon. Member for Derbyshire, No (Mr. Barnes)—how could I ever leave him out?

I, too, represent a constituency close to the l many of my Derbyshire, West constituents are users of the line. My hon. Friend the Mem Kettering (Mr. Freeman), the Minister for Transport, also takes a close interest in the line recently met members of the consortium of midla line local authorities to discuss its future develop

I assure the House that the importance of the main line to the region is well recognised. The spir lively campaign organised by local authorities a interests in the east midlands has also succe highlighting the importance of the line, which or years ago many people felt was in danger of bec Cinderella line. Today, nothing could be further truth. The midland main line is an important InterCity, British Rail's profitable passenger sect line is bringing in money and is highly valued b Rail.

I remind the House just how good the midla line service is today. There are currently 68 tra weekday to and from London. The quickest of t an average journey time of 75 minutes from Lo Leicester. That is an average of 79 mph. Th

journey time achieved by British Rail—compared with the average that I have just noted—is 66 minutes. The speed and quality of the service has improved considerably in the past 10 years. BR tells me that in 1980 the London to Leicester time was 106 minutes, half an hour slower than today, and with an average speed of only 56 mph—23 mph slower than today.

Similar improvements have been made in journey times to Derby and to Sheffield. In 1980, the average journey time to Derby was 146 minutes; now it is 108 minutes. The average speed of that journey has increased from 52 mph to 71 mph. I think that it is right to point to that, because it shows the improvements that have been made on that line, which I use on quite a few occasions.

The hon. Member for Leicester, East spoke about attracting more investment into the area. With the greatest respect, I wish that Opposition Members would not keep talking down the region. It gets investment now—for example, Toyota has invested in Derby, and it is the largest single investment ever contemplated in Europe. That has happened without electrification. The region has a great deal going for it because of the successful economic policies of this Government.

Major work has taken place over the past few years at terminals on the route, with improvements to car parking at many stations, including Derby. There have also been improvements to passenger facilities and to travel centres such as the one at Leicester. Schemes completed this year include refurbishment of the passenger lounges at Derby and at Leicester, extension of the car park at Leicester and its improvement by installing closed circuit television, and the building of a new pay-and-display car park at Market Harborough. Total expenditure by British Rail on the infrastructure at Leicester has been over £400,000 this year alone. On the whole of the midland main line, British Rail has spent over £800,000 during this financial year.

Additional improvements are in progress at St. Pancras. At Sheffield—my hon. Friend the Member for Hallam will be interested in this—over £800,000 is being invested in the Sheffield travel centre and the barrier line. Sheffield station, which I visited recently, generally is being upgraded in time for the world student games that will be held in Sheffield next year. There has been continual investment in track renewal to raise the speed of the line. By the May 1990 timetable, more than 40 miles of track south of Leicester had been upgraded to operate at 110 mph resulting in quicker journeys. All of that investment is paying dividends.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bosworth asked about British Rail's position on investment. It needs to come to the Department for investment approval only for schemes above £10 million. Schemes under that figure are solely a matter for British Rail, which must decide its priorities. I hope that that answers my hon. Friend's question and goes some way towards reassuring him on that point.

Mr. Vaz: Hon. Members on both sides of the House agree that the position has improved over the past 10 years. Will the Minister turn his mind to the subject of this debate, which is the electrification of the midland main line? Does he believe that electrification will benefit the region economically and commercially?

Mr. McLoughlin: I hope that there is time to answer that as it is the substance of the debate.

The performance of the trains on the route persistently good. Midland main line trains are exceedi the InterCity punctuality target that 90 per cent. of trai arrive no more than 10 minutes late. The figures f October are typical for achievements this year. They sho that on the midland main line 92·7 per cent. of trains we no more than 10 minutes late.

British Rail also introduced a new route control on t midland main line in April this year. It is based at Der and is responsible for the minute-by-minute control services. It ensures effective communication between the various functions on the line, including catering.

There have also been a number of improvements to t timetable. As I said earlier, journey times have decreas significantly in the past 10 years. Other developments ha included an additional high-speed 125 train and t introduction of a half-hourly service from Leicester London in May 1988. In May 1989 there were also journ time reductions.

In October 1989 an hourly service from Nottingha and Sheffield to London was introduced. This year, May, we saw the introduction of the "Robin Hoo Pullman service from Nottingham and Leicester in t morning to London with a return train in the ea evening. British Rail also increased the evening pe capacity from St. Pancras by 33 per cent. between 19 and May 1990, in response to the growth in traffic.

This is clearly not a line in decline—it is a line wi increasing investment, improving services and mo passengers. Yet I understand the widespread desire f even further improvement. The campaigners want th line to be electrified, but electrification would n necessarily make the trains run any faster. That could achieved with current rolling stock were it not for t layout of the line. The midland main line contains a hi proportion of curves, junctions and stations which me that very high speed is impracticable. Although the spee on the line are good, they could be even better but f speed restrictions of 80 mph through Market Harborou

Comparatively modest further investment of £5 milli in infrastructure could improve the speeds of existi trains on the line, and we are encouraging BR to disc that option with local authorities and others in the regi As I said to my hon. Friend the Member for Bosworth, could take such decisions without necessarily referring the Government.

Nevertheless, I appreciate that there may be a feeli that, with the completion next year of the electrification the east coast main line, the people on the midland ma line may feel that they are in danger of being left behi That electrification, the largest electrification project e and the largest railway project for more than a quarter a century, will reduce journey times from London Edinburgh by 35 minutes. New class 91 locomotives a mark-four rolling stock will carry passengers air-conditioned comfort providing a worthy rival to airlines for passengers from Scotland and the north-east England.

People in the east midlands may also feel that witho electrification they cannot plug into the channel tun network. It is true that in 1993 the range of transp options for travellers all over Britain will be widened w the opening of the channel tunnel—another proj introduced and supported by the Government. It important, however, not to overestimate the importance the tunnel. It will be just one additional route link

[Mr. McLoughlin]

Britain and Europe. Although it will offer new opportunities, particularly for freight transport by rail, it will not supersede the other links such as planes and ferries which will continue to operate and it may well be that air travel continues to be the preferred option for many passengers from beyond London, particularly those travelling on business, for whom time is the crucial factor.

British Rail is required by section 42 of the Channel Tunnel Act 1987 to operate its international services on a proper commercial basis. It can therefore plan services only on the basis of demand that has been demonstrated through market research. It would not make sense for BR to put on speculative services simply in the hope that the market will grow. Its initial plans for channel tunnel services were set out in its section 40 plan last December.

British Rail's channel tunnel day-passenger trains have to run on the electrified network, so there are no current proposals to run such services on the midland main line. It is for British Rail to decide the best means of traction on any line in the first instance. It is unlikely, as far as the midland main line is concerned, that the very large costs of electrification could be commercially justified at present by cost savings or by increased revenue from fares. British Rail does not believe that the additional international traffic alone would tilt the balance in favour of electrification where no sound case otherwise exists.

But I wish to emphasise that the midlands have not been overlooked by BR in its future plans. Excellent interchange connections from the midlands are planned as part of the King's Cross development which is currently the subject of a Bill before the House. The international trains are expected to call at Newark and Peterborough on the east coast main line and at Milton Keynes on the west coast main line, and there are plans for trains from Nottingham, Lincoln, Grimsby and Northampton to connect with those stops.

British Rail will be keeping under review its plans both up to the opening of the tunnel and thereafter. It will welcome an input from local businesses and authorities so that it can formulate an accurate assessment of the developing demand for its services. In view of its commercial remit, however, it can consider proposals for further services only where a viable demand can be demonstrated.

International freight trains will also be a
on non-electrified lines. British Rail expects
to account for some 18 per cent. of channel
It is also considering options for regional fre
in the midlands and negotiations are cont
possible locations.

As I said, there has been considerable i
British Rail in the midland main line, which
Further investment schemes for terminal
signalling on the line are being developed b
I think that we can expect to see further upg
to increase line speed and reduce journ
extremely successful current timetable will b
May 1991 and there will continue to be
management and work to identify po
improvements.

I am keen to see positive planning by B
further improvements to the midland main
frequently use. InterCity expects to take
about the longer-term future of the line ove
or three years. It would be premature
forward, since the rolling stock on the line
replacement until early next century, and t
constraints on the resources available to Br

It is a question not just of money,
important, of manpower and other resource
must put its spending into an order of priori
lines where the service is not as good as it is o
main line, and those are the lines where Bri
invest first. British Rail highly values the
line and is favourably disposed to improvi
shown in its investment record. I would expe
to be able to make a commercial case for in
rolling stock—either electric or diesel—later
We must wait for those proposals and p
forward.

I hope that I have demonstrated the keen
British Rail has invested in the line and cr
service. I believe that passengers using the se
more satisfied with it than they were a fe
want to see the various services continue to
I am sure that they will.

Question put and agreed to.

*Adjourned accordingly at eighteen mi
o'clock.*

House of Commons

Wednesday 21 November 1990

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

MESSAGE FROM THE QUEEN

QUEEN'S SPEECH (ANSWER TO ADDRESS)

THE VICE-CHAMBERLAIN OF THE HOUSEHOLD reported Her Majesty's Answer to the Address, as follows:

I have received with great satisfaction the loyal and dutiful expression of your thanks for the Speech with which I opened the present Session of Parliament.

PRIVATE BUSINESS

BRITISH RAILWAYS (No. 2) BILL

Order for consideration read.

To be considered tomorrow.

Oral Answers to Questions

SCOTLAND

A1

1. **Mr. Beith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many meetings have been held by the group of officials from his Department, the Department of Transport and highway authorities to monitor improvements to the A1.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton): The A1 steering group, which I have set up, had its first meeting on 21 June. A working group of officials has also been established and has met twice.

Mr. Beith: Will those groups be able to consider the terrible accidents that result from head-on collisions on the lethal single-carriageway sections of the A1 and will they consider the strategic importance of the Great North road to Scotland and northern England? Will the Minister keep an open mind to the evidence that they may provide of the need for a dual carriageway along the whole length of the A1?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I do not rule out the possibility of a dual carriageway in the long term, but, as traffic levels are only between 5,000 and 7,000 on the road between Dunbar and Newcastle, I cannot give an indication for the short term. That would mean diverting resources from more pressing road projects elsewhere in Scotland. We expect to proceed with positive action on accident remedial schemes and with five schemes for overtaking opportunities on the road between Dunbar and Newcastle. In addition, we are spending about £50 on a dual carriageway to Haddington and eventu Dunbar.

Sir Hector Monro: Given the interest shown in m Friend's document, "Roads South of Edinburgh", bear in mind the priorities mentioned by many regarding the A7 between Hawick and Carlisle? improvements may take place on that road in th future?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I have ha experience of being driven by my hon. Frie considerable speed on that road and I saw for my problems and the necessity for overtaking opport We shall produce a publicity document stating what improvements will be in the programme in th future. We see that as an important project for road of Hawick and down to the borders.

Mr. Home Robertson: Does the Minister acce having only one cross-border carriageway at Gr insufficient to carry the growing road traffic b Scotland and England? The Secretary of Sta Transport has accepted the logic of a dual carriagew with the A1 route. Will the Minister announce a d the dualling of the dangerously congested stretch b Musselburgh and Dunbar?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Work is being out urgently on the statutory procedures for th carriageway to Haddington. About five times as traffic uses the A74 as the A1. As Edinburgh is Carlisle, we must be realistic about present traffi and apply our resources accordingly.

Brussels Office

2. **Mr. Malcolm Bruce:** To ask the Secretary o for Scotland if he has any plans for establishing a of his Department in Brussels.

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. M Rifkind): Representation of Government Depar through the United Kingdom permanent represe —UKREP—is working very satisfactorily and we h proposals for change.

Mr. Bruce: Is the Secretary of State aware th Scottish Constitutional Convention's proposal account of the rapid development taking place European Community? Is he aware that those pr recognise that it is of paramount importance not o Scotland to have its own Parliament but for the v Scotland to have a direct input into the bureauc Brussels as well as through the Council of Ministers the right hon. and learned Gentleman recogni Europe will develop through direct representati that if Scotland does not have that access, it will l compared with, for example, the länder of Germa

Mr. Rifkind: Scotland already has that represen For example, only yesterday, the Scottish Fi Minister attended the Council of Ministers. Staff Scottish Office are seconded to the United Ki permanent representation in Brussels. There is opportunity for Scotland's interests to be taken fu account.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that Scotland has gained substantially from grants from European Community sources? Will he outline to the House how Scotland's benefits compare with those of other Community countries?

Mr. Rifkind: An interesting example is access to the regional fund. Through the work of the United Kingdom Government, Scotland has received six times more money than has Denmark, although Denmark has separate representation in the Community. That is an example of how the United Kingdom representation has worked extremely successfully in securing resources for Scotland.

Mr. Dewar: Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman accept that, with the imminent demise of the Prime Minister, the time is ripe and the atmosphere is right to set up effective Scottish representation in Brussels? Does he recognise the success of the efforts of the German states, which are lobbying so powerfully for their interests by combining the strength of a major European power with the status of a devolved unit of government representing a distinctive indentity? Is the right hon. and learned Gentleman really saying that the German states have got it totally wrong and that we can afford to stay out of the business of getting our voice heard in that way in Brussels? Is he really ruling out the possibility of a direct Scottish mission or presence in Brussels?

Mr. Rifkind: Comparisons with the German Länder are spurious and irrelevant. The Länder have no representation in the federal German Government and therefore have no other opportunity of having their voices heard. Through the office of the Secretary of State, Scotland is directly involved in the United Kingdom representation in Brussels. If the hon. Gentleman is not aware of that, he clearly has not done his homework properly. No Länder Minister can attend the Council of Ministers on behalf of the federal German Government, so that comparison is of little relevance to the hon. Gentleman's point.

Empty Council Housing

3. **Mr. Gregory:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the most recent figure for empty local authority housing for up to six months, 12 months, and over one year, respectively; if he will list the local authorities concerned; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: On the basis of information returned to the Scottish Development Department, some 26,000 local authority houses are estimated to have been vacant at the end of March 1990.

Information on the length of vacancies is not collected in the form requested, but a table giving details by authority of vacant houses available for reletting has been placed in the House Library.

Mr. Gregory: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving those figures. Is not it a scandal that there are so many empty houses in Scotland? Will my hon. Friend confirm that the worst examples are in Labour-controlled councils, which should put their houses in order and put the homeless first, rather than dogma?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My hon. Friend has a point. About 40 per cent. of the empty houses in Scotland are used for decanting, but a large proportion of the remaining 60 per cent. could be brought b view of the homelessness problems and problems of roofnessness, I particularly authorities that have this statutory respo great care to ensure that they have ava emergency accommodation. We have tak of making sure that authorities will qua support grant if they have a deficit provision.

Mr. McAllion: Is the Minister aware tha houses are riddled with rising and penet severe condensation, that many more req costly repairs and that almost all have no heating? As neither the Minister nor hi would for a moment be prepared to su families to such appalling conditions, the shut up with their loathsome hypocrisy voting for the restoration of the housing su thereby allowing councils to tackle t housing conditions.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I mi sympathy for the hon. Gentleman were it that the Labour Government had an record. In the five years of the last Labo there was a real terms reduction in capita per cent., whereas we have increased it in r per cent. and this year are spending £923 authority, new town and Scottish Hom amounts to very considerable funding.

Mr. John Marshall: Does my hon. Frie fact that Labour-controlled local authori cannot manage their housing stock is a reducing local authority housing stock b right to buy, rather than increasing it, Members suggest?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right. If local authorities have empty stock reason or another, they cannot fill, it sho back into use. If the local authorities themselves, they should involve housing developers. When that has been done, lo usually gone back to live in the houses.

River Cart (Flooding)

4. **Mr. Watson:** To ask the Secreta Scotland what special financial provision l make in order to avoid a repetition of th homes and damage to property caused flooding of the River Cart in Glasgow.

The Minister of State, Scottish Office Regional and islands councils have po Flood Prevention (Scotland) Act 1961 to to protect against flooding. Grants are a towards the eligible costs of approved f schemes.

Mr. Watson: That response displays a c for my constituents in Langside and Batt month once again suffered disruption fro Minister knows that Strathclyde regional forced to cut £60 million from its budget o years and that it cannot even mee

obligations, never mind perform discretionary activities such as flood prevention. Why will not the Minister agree to exceptional grant assistance being made available to deal with this urgent matter?

Mr. Lang: I am happy to tell the hon. Gentleman that White Cart water would certainly be carefully considered if Strathclyde included such a proposal in its plan. The hon. Gentleman gives a misleading picture of Strathclyde's resources. At the end of the present three-year period, the council's budget for water and sewerage will have risen to £71 million—58 per cent. higher than it was last year. It is up to the regional council to decide whether to give the scheme high priority.

Hill Farming

5. **Mr. Buchanan-Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to complete the autumn review of hill farming; and if he will make a statement.

9. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next plans to meet the Scottish National Farmers Union to discuss the future of hill farming in Scotland.

Mr. Rifkind: I met the farmers' unions on 23 October to discuss the economic situation in the hills and uplands. We are considering the arrangements that will apply to next year's hill livestock compensatory allowance scheme and will announce details as soon as possible.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: Will my right hon. and learned Friend acknowledge that farmers in the hill and upland areas have suffered a particularly rough autumn, with a big fall in prices for store lambs and calves? Does he agree that that has serious implications not only for the livelihood of those who work in the area but for the viability of communities in such areas? Will he consider increasing the HLCAs to the maximum allowed, thereby compensating for the heavy losses incurred in this important sector of Scottish agriculture?

Mr. Rifkind: My right hon. Friend is certainly correct that, both this year and last, there have been significant falls in income, for the reasons to which he referred, although that follows two years during which there were considerable improvements. This is a difficult situation and that is why Agriculture Ministers are considering the whole question of the level of HLCAs.

Mr. Kirkwood: Does the Secretary of State accept that the latest estimates suggest that net farm income has dropped by 20 to 30 per cent. in the current financial year? That constitutes a crisis in the upland farming sector in Scotland. Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman heed carefully the words of the right hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Buchanan-Smith) and use the HLCA payments, which he has it in his gift to increase by £20 for a hill cow and £4 for a hill ewe? That help is essential to keep farming communities in Scotland alive.

Mr. Rifkind: Farm incomes in the sector fluctuate significantly from year to year. In 1987-88 and 1988-89, they rose in real terms by 45 per cent. and 16 per cent. respectively. But I do not seek to conceal from the hon. Gentleman or the House the fact that, for the reasons that he suggested, this is a difficult year.

Mr. Macdonald: May I support the call by th hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside Buchanan-Smith) to increase the allowances maximum? Does the Secretary of State accept tha cent. of any increase would be funded by the EEC a the remainder would have to be met by the Kingdom Government? Such an increase is nece help sustain the morale of communities that ar considerable hardship.

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman is correct ab funding arrangements. I acknowledge that the he viability of the hill farming sector are important t to those who work in the sector but to the viabilit rural economy as a whole, especially in Scotlan more than 90 per cent. of land is in the less-favoure

Sir Hector Monro: Does my right hon. and Friend agree that, although it has been a par difficult autumn in the livestock sector, the m increase in the suckler cow subsidy was a substant as was the advance payment of sheep premium? H will my right hon. and learned Friend do ev possible to help hill farmers, bearing in mind, as t hon. Friend the Member for Kincardine and Dees Buchanan-Smith) said, their importance to th community?

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend is correct. More t million has been made available to special producers under the suckler cow premium. The inc which my hon. Friend referred was worth £1·6 m farmers in Scotland, where over 90 per cent. of the herd is located in less-favoured areas.

Scottish Constitutional Convention

6. **Mr. Trimble:** To ask the Secretary of S Scotland whether he has received any represe concerning the Scottish Constitutional Conventio he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: In the past six months one letter ab Scottish Constitutional Convention has been rec was from the National Union of Mineworkers.

Mr. Trimble: The Minister may agree that de on a purely Scottish basis might be divisive wi kingdom. However, does he also accept that the of the convention shows that there is a wide d reform which is not confined solely to Scotland? consider reforming the government of the regio United Kingdom basis as that would have the ad of enabling the Government to apply within the Kingdom the principle of subsidiarity to which the in their relationship with Europe? It would a effective devolution of powers to local authori regions.

Mr. Lang: Surely it is a strength of our constitutional arrangements that, with separate t departments, the Government can address the problems of each part of the United Kingdom in ways. It is not for me to comment on the po Northern Ireland. However, in Scotland the in devolution is considerably exaggerated by the

support it. During the general election the interest in devolution rose from 2 per cent. at the beginning of the campaign to 4 per cent. at the end.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does my hon. Friend agree that, as the convention has concluded its deliberations, we can now look at the details? As with all constitutional change, Parliament takes an interest when the details are known. Any proposals that cannot and will not go through this Parliament because they do not receive a majority in the House have no hope of being adopted. Any hon. Member who supports such proposals is either supporting fraud or is fraudulent.

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend puts the point extremely well. Unfortunately, the constitutional convention cannot be the source of detailed information, as it has ducked every serious question relating to devolution. It has not addressed the fact that Scotland would suffer considerably as a result of the creation of separate tax-raising powers. Its additional funding from the United Kingdom Parliament would be in considerable jeopardy.

Mr. Harry Ewing: Will the Minister tell me—I promise faithfully that I will not breathe a word of it to anyone else—whether, on this day of all days, he does not wish that he could get the same unity in the Tory party as we managed to get in the convention?

Mr. Lang: It is no sort of unity when every single question of any substance is ducked, ignored or swept under the carpet. The so-called constitutional convention is operating on a bogus prospectus and has totally failed to address the real issues.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Does my hon. Friend think that the people of Scotland would benefit from having the United Kingdom broken up and that their economy would benefit from it? Would they be better off with a United Kingdom Parliament? What would happen to the Labour party, whose Front Bench is stuffed with Scotsmen speaking on English matters?

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend makes an absolutely vital point. If one were to invite the opinion of business men in Scotland, the almost unanimous view would be that a Scottish assembly with tax-raising powers would be immensely damaging to Scotland economically.

Textiles and Knitwear

7. **Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received concerning the future of the textile and knitwear industry in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend and I have received representations from a number of hon. Members, textile firms and organisations representing the textile and knitwear industry in Scotland.

Mr. Foulkes: I am grateful to the Minister. Is he aware that, our having lost 4,000 mining jobs, the textile, clothing and knitwear sector is now the main employer in my constituency? Will he therefore make representations to the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to ensure that the multi-fibre arrangement continues for at least 10 years and that the general agreement on tariffs and trade rules are strengthened? If that does not happen, imports from newly industrialised countries which are not poor will devastate the industry and create unemployment in my constituency, which has the highest unemployment of any travel-to-work area in Great Britain, as the Minister of State should know only too well.

Mr. Lang: As the hon. Gentleman will know, the textiles negotiating group is in almost continuous session at present. It is hoped that the present round of GATT talks will end in Brussels in the first week of December. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will agree that the MFA imposes a costly barrier with significant costs, running into billions of pounds, for consumers in this country. That sort of distortion to trade is not in the best interests of any industry in the long run. It is important that the industry should become competitive and efficient, use the best technology and modern methods and improve quality and design, thus securing strong new markets.

Mr. Lamble: I am sure that the Minister is aware that I have sent petitions signed by the whole work force of major textile companies in my constituency—Strathclyde Knitwear and Queen of Scots Hosiery—appealing to me to try to get the Tory Government to maintain the multi-fibre arrangement. I am sure also that the Minister of State knows that I have received a very distressing letter from the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry saying that on no account will the Government maintain the multi-fibre arrangement. Unless the Scottish Office and Scottish Ministers speak up for Scottish hosiery and knitwear workers, as my hon. Friend the Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) said, we shall see the complete demise of the industry and greater unemployment in our area. If the Minister and the Secretary of State for Scotland cannot get the Government to change their policy, should not they resign and stand up for Scotland?

Mr. Lang: Of course, it is important that in the new GATT arrangements provisions have to be strengthened to ensure that Scottish industry is protected from dumping and surging and that markets in developing countries are opened up to our producers. Scottish circumstances have been taken fully into account in pursuing the negotiations.

Mr. Dickens: How can we rely on the sincerity of the Opposition, with their tears for the textile industry, when they have cancelled an important debate this week on the textile industry in which I was hoping to speak? Indeed, many people intended to come to the House of Commons to lobby Members. The Opposition also cancelled a debate on the Scottish economy. When they are sincere, I shall believe them.

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend makes a very persuasive point. What the industry should be doing—the best companies are doing it—is pursuing a positive approach to find new markets. I saw that when I met the Scottish Wool Publicity Council on my recent visit to Japan and when I met the National Wool Textile Export Corporation in Korea.

Agriculture

8. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received regarding the current state of agriculture in Scotland.

Mr. Rifkind: I have received various representations on aspects of Scottish agriculture. In particular, I met the president of the Scottish National Farmers Union on 23 October to discuss the circumstances of farmers in the hills and uplands in the light of the weakness in the livestock markets this autumn.

Mr. Wallace: The Secretary of State has heard concern about the hill farmers in earlier questions. Does he accept that those fears are compounded by the proposed cut in commodity support? Can he confirm that, despite the cut in production support, there remains a surplus of income which could be channelled to support other than for production? If that is so, what constructive proposals have the Government put forward to ensure that that money is channelled towards the family farms, particularly in the upland areas?

Mr. Rifkind: If, as I assume, the hon. Gentleman is referring to the 30 per cent. reduction in subsidies as part of the GATT negotiating process, he will be aware that part of the Council of Ministers announcement was that the total level of support to the less-favoured areas of the Community would not be reduced. As 90 per cent. of Scotland is in the less-favoured area category, that was an encouraging announcement. Precise details on how that might be achieved are being considered by the Commission and we expect proposals in the relatively near future.

Mr. Andrew Welsh: Does the Minister agree with the statement by the president of the NFU that Scottish agriculture faces its worst crisis since the 1930s and that he fears a spate of bankruptcies in the hill and upland sector? What input, direct or otherwise, did the Minister and his Department have in this week's GATT talks between Ray MacSharry and the American Agriculture Secretary? If there was none, will he tell us why?

Mr. Rifkind: Obviously, we would not be directly involved in talks between the American Secretary of State and a European Commissioner—in the circumstances, it would be rather odd if we were. The British Government are very much involved in the GATT negotiations and played a prominent part in the conclusions reached by the Council of Ministers a few weeks ago.

Mr. Wilson: Does the Secretary of State agree that, on top of all the other problems pressing in on agricultural and rural Scotland, none is more serious than the disproportionate impact of the poll tax? Does he accept that rural Scotland and urban Scotland are waiting to hear where he stands on that great issue? Is he to be a born-again Heseltini, demanding an instant review, or will he cling to the sinking ship and maintain the Thatcherite line that nothing is wrong? Will he tell rural and urban Scotland today where he stands on the poll tax?

Mr. Rifkind: If the hon. Gentleman was interested in the subject and concerned about the plight of those in the rural sector, particularly the farming community, and the impact of local government taxation, he should do what he can to change his party's policy to end the derating of agricultural land. He must know perfectly well that the introduction of a farmers tax by a Labour Government would devastate the rural economy. He might, therefore, explain to the House why the Labour party is proposing, in Scotland alone, such a penal form of taxation directed against Scotland's farming community.

Mr. Bill Walker: While my right hon. and learned Friend is listening to the NFU's representations, will he bear in mind that the raspberry and soft fruit industry in the Tayside area is an essential part of the Tayside economy and that the dumping which has taken place over the years from eastern Europe, particularly of pulp, has had an impact? When the Council of Europe is looking into such matters will my right hon. and learned Friend remind it of the importance of raspberries to Tayside?

Mr. Rifkind: Yes, I am aware that that industry makes a significant and important contribution to the well-being of the rural areas of Tayside. It is important, particularly when access to EC markets from countries outside the Community is being considered, that the impact of any such proposals on those who depend on that product for their livelihood should be fully taken into account. My hon. Friend is correct to draw attention to that matter.

Devolution

10. **Mr. John D. Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on Government policy on the devolution of powers of legislation to Scotland.

Mr. Lang: The Government believe that the present constitutional arrangements affecting powers of legislation meet Scotland's needs.

Mr. Taylor: As some 25 per cent. of the people of Scotland and Northern Ireland support political nationalism, and as a constitutional reform is topical subject in both territories, why do the Government discourage inter-party dialogue through the convention in Scotland while at the same time encouraging inter-party dialogue in Northern Ireland? Why do the Government, on the subject of constitutional reform, as on so many other subjects, have two different policies?

Mr. Lang: I should have thought that the right hon. Gentleman would be one of the first to welcome the fact that the Government can make special provision for the needs and circumstances of Northern Ireland, just as I welcome the fact that the Government can make special provision for the needs and circumstances of Scotland. I must make it clear to him that the self-styled constitutional convention is not a body to which the Government give any credence or authority. It was set up by several interested individuals who believe that they can thereby advance a cause—a cause with which I do not have a great deal of sympathy.

Mr. Ernie Ross: The Minister might have had more impact in the House if he or any of his colleagues had attended even one meeting of the constitutional convention. They were invited to each and every one. The Minister must know that the convention reports on its deliberations next Friday. That will give him and his colleagues, in particular the right hon. and learned Member for Edinburgh, Pentlands (Mr. Rifkind), a last opportunity to save face. Do they intend to attend to see

whether they support the views agreed on by the convention or do they propose any other alternative before next Friday?

Mr. Lang: It is almost impossible either to agree or disagree with the views expressed by a body which has failed to address any of the significant points of the debate on devolution. For example, does the convention believe that Scotland should continue to have a Secretary of State in the Cabinet? [HON. MEMBERS: "Yes."] Does it consider that the number of Members of Parliament should remain the same? [HON. MEMBERS: "Yes."] Does it believe that it is possible for Scotland to continue to enjoy additional funding from the United Kingdom while it has power to raise taxation at home? [HON. MEMBERS: "Yes."] How does the hon. Gentleman justify asking English Members of Parliament to vote for higher spending on specific areas in Scotland when taxation would be voted through a Scottish assembly to establish a different position?

Mr. Andy Stewart: Does my hon. Friend agree that the type of home rule suggested by the convention is home rule paid for by English and Welsh taxpayers?

Mr. Lang: In so far as the views of the convention are comprehensible, that is certainly one interpretation.

Sir Russell Johnston: Does the Minister agree that it is a contradiction for the Government to claim to oppose centralisation in the European Community when they have been the most centralising Government in the United Kingdom since the war?

Mr. Lang: I do not agree with the hon. Gentleman at all. The Government believe in decentralisation, but we decentralise in reality rather than through posturing legislative proposals.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Does my hon. Friend agree that, while Opposition Members may believe that they could get away with a form of devolution for Scotland paid for by English and Welsh taxpayers, it would be simply intolerable? Does he agree that the only possible financial outcome of the convention's proposals would be a far higher level of taxation in Scotland than in England and Wales?

Mr. Lang: That is absolutely right and I am certain that once that fact is brought home to the people of Scotland they will change their view radically and withdraw any support that they might give to a separate Scottish assembly. Certainly, the business community is well aware of the considerable danger that a separate Scottish assembly would create in Scotland.

Mr. Douglas: Will the Minister reflect that what we really desire in Scotland is legislation based on the sovereignty of the Scottish people? Is he aware that if we had that, we would not have the poll tax, because it rests on the sovereignty of the British Parliament? Currently the British Parliament does not have a majority in favour of the poll tax. Therefore, the people of Scotland would be perfectly entitled, having expressed their views on the legislation in 1987, to stop paying the poll tax now.

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman is living in cloud cuckoo land. The last time questions of devolution were put to the test in Scotland was in the referendum of 1978. It was clear that only about a third of the Scottish people supported devolution.

Mr. Worthington: One area in which we already have separate powers of legislation is education. Can the Minister clarify his legislative plans for student unions? Last Friday at 3.25 pm a statement was issued by the Minister of State which mentioned separate legislation on this for Scotland, but at 4.40 pm that was withdrawn and deemed not to exist. On Sunday, a handwritten statement——

Mr. Speaker: Order. What has this to do with devolution of powers?

Mr. Worthington: It is to do with separate legislation for Scotland, which is what the question is about, Mr. Speaker.

On Sunday a handwritten note came out omitting any reference to legislation or freedom of speech. What are the Minister's plans for legislation on student unions, and why was the initial statement withdrawn?

Mr. Lang: I am sure that if the hon. Gentleman tables a question to that effect it will be answered at the appropriate time. As he is aware, the present question is not about students or the issue that he raises. As the hon. Gentleman raised the matter of education, however, he may like to know that education is one of many areas in which we in Scotland enjoy substantially higher central Government expenditure than is made south of the border —a situation which would not continue in the event of a tax-raising Scottish assembly being created.

Lothian Health Board

11. **Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will estimate the net projected savings of Lothian health board in the current financial year.

The Minister of State, Scottish Office (Mr. Michael Forsyth): Action taken by the board should bring monthly income and expenditure into balance by the end of the year.

Mr. Griffiths: Does the Minister of State not realise that he and his vile policies have brought Lothian health board to the brink of bankruptcy and that this year it faces cuts of £12 million on top of ward and hospital closures? Why is it that, during all the years of stewardship by the Secretary of State, during which he has appointed Tory party hacks to preside over Lothian health board, there has been a financial crisis every year? When will the Minister of State encourage his right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State to sack Lothian health board and resign?

Mr. Forsyth: I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman should seek to attack the record of Lothian health board in that way. As he knows, there is a new hospital—St. John's—in the constituency of his hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook). There has been a series of new developments in Lothian and the board has rationalised services. During the period to which the hon. Gentleman refers, more patients than ever before have been treated and the board has employed more staff who have seen their salaries go up by more in real terms. I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman seeks to decry the record of the board and to demoralise the staff and those who are doing so well in Lothian as a result of the board's work.

Mr. Eadie: The hon. Gentleman cannot get away with the statistics that he trots out. He must be very well aware that, virtually without exception, the medical profession in Edinburgh has said that if Lothian health board persists with its cuts—not savings—it will harm hospital care in the Lothian region. The hon. Gentleman cannot deny that.

Mr. Forsyth: The hon. Gentleman should be aware that the proposals by Lothian health board for rationalisation of services and bringing expenditure into line with income had the support of the area medical committee and the medical profession. That is because people recognise that the proposed closures are part of proposals to bring modern facilities and modern hospitals into being. That must be right if the board is to be able to meet the demands of the next century and beyond.

Mr. Galbraith: Does the Minister agree that part of the reason for Lothian being in trouble is that it had to spend a large amount of money on the bureaucracy to set up the internal market? By April 1991, it will have wasted £50 million on bureaucracy to set up a market which is unworkable, extremely expensive and intensely bureaucratic. Would not it be better to spend that £50 million on patient care rather than on employing more bureaucrats to push more paper around?

Mr. Forsyth: I welcome the hon. Gentleman's conversion to local management. He is arguing that decisions should be taken at local level, that patients should be allowed to go where they can best obtain treatment and that resources should follow them. That is an internal market. The independent consultants' report showed clearly that Lothian health board's problems had arisen from financial mismanagement. If anything, that vindicates our determination to ensure proper accountability of funds in the health service.

Family Housing

12. **Mr. Sillars:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what additional resources he estimates are required by district councils to meet the needs of families who are overcrowded, living in damp houses or are homeless.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: If authorities consider that additional resources are required they should include their expenditure proposals in the housing capital programmes which are due to be submitted to the Scottish Office this month.

Mr. Sillars: Is the Minister aware that that is a totally unsatisfactory answer? Anyone who read the special article in *The Scotsman* on Saturday—I take it that the Minister did—about homelessness and various other problems could not conceivably accept that answer as a suitable reply to a crisis that especially faces our young people. Does he recall from that article that homelessness among the 16 and 17-year-old group has increased by 85 per cent. in the city of Edinburgh and 95 per cent. in the city of Glasgow? It is now estimated that 10,000 young people are sleeping rough on the streets of Scotland in places known as cardboard cities. Will the Minister take emergency action this side of Christmas to bring those people into shelter?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Obviously I agree that it is unacceptable for a single person to be without a roof, That is why I strongly recommend local authorities to state whether they have emergency accommodation available. The Hamish Allan centre in Glasgow, part of which the hon. Gentleman represents, does that job extremely well. Local authorities, together with housing associations, should negotiate nomination rights. I know that Scottish Homes is now actively encouraging housing associations to provide short-term, furnished bedsit accommodation. Local authorities should look at all the possibilities as well as bringing back into use the many vacant houses in their possession.

On homelessness costs, we have come forward with an initiative to make certain that, in future, local authority costs will be borne by the taxpayers at large—the community charge payers—so that they no longer fall on rent payers alone.

Mr. Darling: Is not it a disgrace that on the streets of the capital of Scotland people are sleeping rough every night of the year? Will the Minister heed the fact that only a quarter of Edinburgh's total housing stock is in the public sector? Unless we expand the total amount of cheap, low-cost housing, the plight of the homeless is likely to get worse. We should pay attention to that problem throughout the year, not just at Christmas.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: A considerable proportion of Edinburgh's public housing stock is empty—more than 7 per cent., which is much higher than that of other Scottish cities. I strongly urge Edinburgh to do everything in its power to bring more of that stock into operation. Nobody should be without a roof and I believe that Edinburgh will take its statutory responsibilities seriously. If it needs more hostels, it should make that absolutely clear in the housing plan that it submits and which we shall consider urgently and sympathetically as soon as we receive it.

Mr. Maxton: Is not there something sickening about a Minister who ensures that his own family are properly housed but shows such callous disregard for the misery caused by homelessness and by dampness and overcrowding in housing? Those problems are a direct result of the cuts that the Government have imposed on housing in the past 10 years.

Is not it true that total expenditure by central Government for local government housing has been cut by more than 50 per cent? Is not it also true that the Minister voted for his right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine)? If so, does he agree with his right hon. Friend that a much more interventionist policy should be pursued in terms of housing?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I voted for the Prime Minister—*[Interruption.]* Like Monty, she is a victory-winning general.

Since 1979 we have increased resources by 7 per cent., whereas the Labour party reduced resources by no less than 36 per cent. I do not believe that it is necessarily appropriate to take responsibilities away from local authorities. Given that they take those responsibilities seriously, we shall respond quickly and effectively to their requests in relation to housing.

Natural Heritage Agency

13. **Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what resources will be allocated to the planned natural heritage agency; and if he will list its responsibilities.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Scottish Natural Heritage is expected to come into being only in 1992 and therefore decisions on resources for it will be taken in next year's public expenditure survey.

Mrs. Fyfe: Does the Minister accept that hon. Members on both sides of the House have expressed concern about certain species of Scottish wildlife? Would he care to tell the House whether he thinks that 1992 might be too late to take care of members of one particular species in Scotland, who have been observed pecking each other to death and only last night tearing their hair out? I refer, of course, to Scottish Conservative Members.

More seriously, may I ask whether the Minister will ensure that, when Scottish Natural Heritage is formed, it will be composed of people who genuinely care for the countryside and are genuinely representative and not merely of yet more Tory placemen?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The hon. Lady has made a serious point. I accept that the people concerned must be experts in their field, and that they must form a representative cross-section. I have no doubt that, led by Magnus Magnusson—who is exceptional and outstanding in this regard—a much stronger environmental body will prove to be wholly in Scotland's interests.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: As my hon. Friend must be aware, there is a series of proposals, including his own, concerning the future status of an important natural environment area—the Cairngorm mountains. As there is certainly no unanimity on the question of the structure that should evolve for it, would not it be better to leave decisions about the matter until Scottish Natural Heritage is established as the best body to assess and conclude what the status of that important part of Scotland should be?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I have considerable sympathy with what my right hon. Friend has said. World heritage listing is a great honour for an area, but it creates strong expectations that management will be in harmony with the status of the area, which is one of the most beautiful in Europe.

Steel Industry

14. **Mr. Ingram:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the Government's strategy for the steel industry in Scotland.

Mr. Rifkind: The Scottish Development Agency has, at my request, commissioned consultants to look at the prospects for the steel industry in Scotland. British Steel has undertaken to consider carefully any commercial opportunities which may be identified by the study.

Mr. Ingram: I am tempted to ask the Secretary of State, "Is that it?" That does not seem much of a strategy to the thousands of workers and families who will be affected by the closures at Clydesdale and Ravenscraig and who will see it as a complete sell-out of Scotland's interests.

Has the Secretary of State seen the investmen proposals put forward by the Clydesdale work force? If so what does he propose to do about them? Is he prepared t argue the case with the board of British Steel? And i British Steel is not prepared to adopt the proposals, wha action will he take to find an alternative buyer for th plant?

Mr. Rifkind: I am aware of the investment proposal presented by the trade unions concerned and I understan that they are with British Steel, which will no doub consider them. As for the question of an alternativ purchaser, British Steel has said that it might, in certai circumstances, be prepared to consider an alternativ purchaser for the Clydesdale works. Obviously, we sha all be anxious to know whether a purchaser comes forwar who is prepared to consider such an option.

Dr. Reid: Will the Secretary of State publicly welcom the decision by the Select Committee on Trade an Industry to investigate the circumstances surrounding th proposed closure of the hot strip mill at Ravenscraig an the Clydesdale works? Will he regard that Committee no as a rival, but as a partner in all our efforts to have th decisions reversed? Will he provide the Committee wit any information—however preliminary—that the Scottis Development Agency study has already produced? Will h impress on its members the need to call Sir Robert Schole as a witness to answer the questions that he has so fa refused to answer? Will he ensure that the eight or nin questions that the Ravenscraig shop stewards have alread put to the Secretary of State are given to the Sele Committee, which can then use its powers to ensure tha Scholey answers the questions that so far he has bee avoiding?

Mr. Rifkind: I am happy that the Select Committe wishes to consider the matter. My Department and I wi give our full co-operation to the Committee in response t any requests that it may make.

Mr. Dewar: Will the Secretary of State confirm that th Government report arguing the case for Dalzell as a si for the British Steel plate mill development has bee passed to the consultants, Arthur D. Little? On October, I asked the Minister whether he was still trying persuade British Steel to reconsider its closure plans Ravenscraig and Clydesdale, and he replied, "Yes, certainly am". Can he say what steps he is taking in th enterprise and whether he intends to meet Sir Robe Scholey in the immediate future?

Mr. Rifkind: The consultants have access to ar information that they require and any future meetings wi the chairman of British Steel will depend on whether think such a meeting likely to be fruitful.

Council House Sales

15. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State f Scotland how many council houses have been sold sitting tenants in Scotland since May 1979.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Since April 1979, w over 200,000 public sector houses in Scotland have be sold to sitting tenants, including 148,000 by loc authorities to sitting tenants.

Mr. Knox: What percentage of the council house stock in Scotland has been sold to sitting tenants? If the figure is still significantly lower than the figure in England, what steps is the Minister taking to increase sales in Scotland?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The figure is 20·4 per cent. and the gap between Scotland and England is narrowing—it was 4 per cent. earlier this year and has dropped to 3·2 per cent. We are ensuring through publicity that people in Scotland are well aware of the opportunities before them and of the trial rents-to-mortgages scheme which will be extended to a total of 370,000 tenants. We are taking steps as quickly as possible.

Mr. William McKelvey: How many houses have been repossessed because the sitting tenants could no longer afford the mortgage repayments because of the Government's policies?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: In Britain, the figure is less than 0·1 per cent. and in Scotland it is believed to be considerably lower because, on average, market values are considerably lower in Scotland than south of the border. It is not a great problem and building societies are taking every possible step to meet the legitimate wishes of those in trouble.

Health Boards and Councils

16. **Mr. David Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what criteria he intends using to appoint people to the new health boards and local health councils when these are set up.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Criteria for appointments to the new health boards are included in the consultation letter issued to nominating bodies. Members of local health councils are not appointed by my right hon. and learned Friend.

Mr. Marshall: Is not the Minister ashamed of his present policy of almost always appointing Tory party lackeys to health boards, all of whom should be removed by the incoming Labour Government? How does he justify the fact that the eastern half of Glasgow, where there is a population of several hundred thousand, does not have even one local person to represent it on the Greater Glasgow health board? When will he end that disgraceful situation?

Mr. Forsyth: If the Member of Parliament for the relevant district were to nominate someone, which he has not done, we could give consideration to the matter.

Mr. Hood: I know that next Monday the Minister will be busy running round getting votes for his right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, but will he make himself available at St. Andrew's house in Edinburgh at 12 noon on Monday to receive a petition from the Clydesdale constituents opposing the elimination of acute medical services in the Clydesdale region by the closure of Law hospital in Stonehouse?

Mr. Forsyth: As the hon. Gentleman knows, the approval and principal proposal has yet to come to Ministers. However, I assure the hon. Gentleman that I shall take account of the representations that he and others have made about the outcome that they would like to see.

Heart Surgery

17. **Mr. Michael J. Martin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many patients in Scotland have suffered from heart attacks while they were on national health service waiting lists for heart surgery during the last 12 months.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information is not available in the form requested.

Mr. Martin: The Minister must know that many medical people in Glasgow and Scotland are extremely worried because angiogram examination waiting lists are so long and some patients have died from heart attacks before receiving examination. Surely it is sad if people die because waiting lists are too long.

Mr. Forsyth: The Government have considerably expanded the number of cardiac operations carried out in Scotland, in Edinburgh, Glasgow and Aberdeen where cardiac surgery is provided. As the hon. Gentleman will know, we have also set targets to reduce the number of premature deaths due to heart attacks by more than 1,000 per annum by the end of the century. I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's concern and shall certainly give urgent consideration to the waiting list problem.

National Health Service

18. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will take action to improve the national health service in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Yes. Since 1979 an extra 723,000 patients are being treated every year, an extra 8,849 nurses have been employed at salaries which have risen by more than 40 per cent. in real terms and 68 major new hospital projects have been completed. That is a record to be proud of.

Mr. Canavan: Most of the members of the Forth Valley health board are the Minister's constituents and were appointed by him. Is he aware of the public concern about the increasingly secretive and autocratic way in which the board is behaving, especially since he appointed his Tory friend Mrs. Isbister to chair the health board? Is not it high time that she and her Tory henchmen were sacked from the health board as they are undermining the national health service and threatening standards of patient care?

Mr. Forsyth: I think that it is high time the hon. Gentleman paid tribute to the real achievements of the Forth Valley health board, including the splendid new £18 million extension to Stirling royal infirmary, and to its splendid efforts to cut waiting lists and extend patient care. The hon. Gentleman should also pay tribute to the transformation that has been brought about in the Royal Scottish National hospital at Larbert in his constituency, at which mentally handicapped patients have benefited from greatly improved standards.

CSCE Summit

3.30 pm

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher) *rose*——

Hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is a very important statement which the House is anxious to hear.

The Prime Minister: With permission, Mr. Speaker, I shall make a statement on the meeting in Paris of the 34 Heads of State and Government of the conference on security and co-operation in europe which my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary and I attended from 19 to 21 November.

The text of the final document of the summit has been placed in the Library of the House. I shall draw the House's attention briefly to its main points.

First, the final document enshrines the basic human rights and fundamental freedoms which are indispensable for the functioning of a democratic society based on the rule of law. As well as guaranteeing political rights, it commits the 34 Helsinki states to the principles of the market economy and it calls for the protection of the rights of minorities in Europe.

Secondly, the final document provides for regular political consultations between the 34 countries at ministerial and official level. A small secretariat will be set up to service these consultations.

Thirdly, there is a commitment to find better ways to encourage peaceful solutions to disputes. The United Kingdom has put forward a proposal for voluntary conciliation. This will be among the matters to be discussed at a follow-up meeting on the peaceful settlement of disputes in Malta in January. With the new freedom in east and central Europe, after a long period during which national feelings were suppressed by force, we have to reckon with a resurgence of nationality and minority problems.

Fourthly, we established a conflict prevention centre, which is intended to reduce the risk of conflict resulting from misunderstanding or misinterpretation of the intentions of others. It will also have the task of overseeing the measures agreed at the summit to strengthen confidence and security between nations in Europe.

Fifthly, we decided to set up an office for free elections—*[Laughter.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

The Prime Minister —which will facilitate contacts and the exchange of information on elections within participating states.

Lastly, there was agreement on the need for a CSCE parliamentary assembly covering all 34 Helsinki countries. Obviously it is right that parliamentarians themselves should take the lead in setting this up. The Spanish Parliament will host a special meeting of parliamentarians next year to discuss the arrangements.

Another major achievement of the summit was the signature by the 22 states of NATO and the Warsaw pact of the treaty to reduce conventional armed forces in Europe. This is the most substantial and far-reaching agreement for the reduction of armaments which has yet been achieved. It requires the countries of the Warsaw pact, and in particular the Soviet Union, to make m reductions in the numbers of their tanks, ar armoured vehicles, helicopters and aircraft.

The overhang of vastly superior numbers of W pact forces, which has for so long been a threat to w Europe, will be eliminated. There will in future be parity in forces between east and west. The Soviet ca to launch a surprise attack and large-scale offensive will also be removed. The treaty has very ex verification provisions.

The steady resolve of the United Kingdom a United States to maintain strong defence during th when the Warsaw pact represented a direct challe our way of life and our refusal to give way to m threats were crucial in securing this excellent agre

A declaration on friendly relations betwee members of NATO and the Warsaw pact was also at the same time as the CFE treaty, making it clear t no longer regard each other as adversaries. In addi had bilateral meetings with among others, President President Gorbachev, President Mitterrand, Cha Kohl, President Ozal, President Zhelev and the Nations Secretary-General. They provided the opp ity to discuss the whole range of current European the situation in the Gulf and other regional proble

The word historic tends to be used extravagantl days, but I believe that this summit was an h gathering. It marked the end of the cold war in Euro the triumph of democracy, freedom and the rule

The Helsinki agreements played a crucial p achieving this. They gave encouragement and insp to the brave individuals—people like Dr. Sakharo Orlov, President Havel and many others—who struggle for basic human rights in the darkest totalitarianism. They had a charter to which they appeal to show that not only was their course a ju but that the Governments and authorities tha denying them their rights were in breach of obligations. At the same time, the agreement Governments and people in the west a locus to inqu what would otherwise be regarded as strictly i matters and to insist on observance of human right then communist countries.

Britain has throughout been in the forefront o who supported the struggle for human rights in tho days and it was this Government's suggestion t should have a new Magna Carta for Europe wh directly to the declaration on human rights at this s

We should not expect too much of the CSCE. I a defence organisation and we should not try to one. NATO will remain the core of Western defen the CSCE can serve as an example of observance of rights, of how countries should behave towards eac and of how to settle disputes peacefully. In short, it be a model for peace, stability and good neighbou

I believe that the outcome of the summit is one o this Government, this House and this country proud.

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): I thank the Prime M for that statement. This is an occasion when th House, together with the country and the international community, can truly celebrate the en the cold war. It is also an occasion on which it is r us all in the House to commit ourselves to b through negotiation and co-operation, an enduring

of common security, with all its great opportunities and challenges. May I therefore join the Prime Minister in warmly welcoming the signature of the treaty on conventional forces in Europe and the charter of Paris for a new Europe.

This is the time when it is right to pay particular tribute to former President Reagan, President Bush, President Gorbachev and all those who not only desired but helped to create opportunities for the historic progress that is now being made. [HON. MEMBERS: "And the Prime Minister."] And, as the Prime Minister said, it is time, too, to recognise the contribution made over the years by the people of Britain in achieving that objective. It is also time— *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. These are very important matters of great interest to the nation. I ask the House to listen quietly.

Mr. Kinnock: It is time, too, to join the Prime Minister in recording admiration and gratitude to those who, from the beginning of the Helsinki process, and indeed for years before it, placed human rights and freedom at the centre of international relations and pursued that cause even at times of difficulty, great frustration and personal danger. The effort for full freedom must continue until all peoples truly enjoy the rights of national and individual self-determination.

Does the Prime Minister now accept that the new architecture of Germany and of the whole of central and eastern Europe makes the presence of short-range nuclear weapons redundant and that they therefore should be removed as soon as a negotiated settlement can be achieved? In that respect, will the Prime Minister confirm that action is being taken to give effect to last July's NATO summit agreement that new negotiations on the reduction of short-range nuclear forces in Europe should begin shortly after the CFE agreement is signed?

May I tell the right hon. Lady that we welcome the decisions that strengthen the institutions of the CSCE and give it a more active role in seeking to assist in the resolution of inter-regional and international disputes? I recognise the role of the Prime Minister, the Foreign Secretary and the Government in trying to achieve that objective.

Can the Prime Minister envisage the possibility that, in addition to the vital role fulfilled by NATO, the CSCE might have a part to play in the verification of arms reduction in Europe? Does she share the view that the best way to ensure future European security is to encourage the advance of sustainable economic growth across the continent, including eastern Europe? Will she acknowledge, however, that, while freedom is essential for that advance, it is not by itself enough? Does she agree that freedom in central and eastern Europe must be accompanied by substantial support from western countries if that freedom is to be certain and sustained? What new proposals does she have, therefore, for increasing Britain's programme support to the levels achieved by several of our allies and European Community partners?

Finally, will the Prime Minister report progress in efforts to maintain effective pressure on Iraq so that the United Nations objective of securing the unconditional withdrawal of Iraq from Kuwait can be achieved?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman. It was a very good day—an excellent agreement for the whole of Europe, the United States, Canada and, indeed, the whole of the western world.

Four points arose from the right hon. Gentleman's questions. Negotiations can start on short-range nuclear weapons as the CFE treaty has been signed and starts to be implemented. The right hon. Gentleman will recall that at the NATO summit last year we made it quite clear that short-range nuclear weapons will continue to fulfil an essential role in the overall strategy of the alliance to prevent war by ensuring that there are no circumstances in which nuclear retaliation in response to military action can be discounted. We can negotiate to reduce those weapons, but they nevertheless continue to play a fundamental part in the flexible response. It is vital, from that communiqué, that we keep some of them.

Verification is dealt with in the CFE treaty; it is between NATO and the Warsaw pact and that is where it must remain. There are very sophisticated ways of dealing with this and very intrusive methods of verification, but it is right that they should stay with those 22 countries which signed the agreements. The future of the Warsaw pact is a matter for those countries. Many of them think that it will become more of a political organisation and that it has very little relevance to armaments for the east European countries.

With regard to support, we have know-how funds and we recently announced a new one for the Soviet Union. We shall consider the matter further with regard to the Soviet Union when we have the IMF report, which will be considered at the economic summit at the end of this year, and when we have the full report from Europe, which similarly will be considered in December.

With regard to Iraq and Kuwait, it is vital that the United Nations resolutions are all implemented in their entirety. If they are not, the military option would have to be exercised.

Sir Jim Spicer (Dorset, West): My right hon. Friend has rightly spoken of our steady resolve in the 1980s which brought about this welcome reduction in arms in Europe. Will she comment on the role played in the 1980s by those who supported the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament? Could she have been reporting to the House today if those people had had their way?

The Prime Minister: The nuclear deterrent has been a vital part in our sure defence and in our being able to negotiate the conventional force reductions which I announced. It is still a vital part of NATO and will remain so. Had not we been absolutely staunch—we were the first to station cruise missiles in this country—we would not have been in a position to have a disarmament agreement and to see the amazing changes in eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): I congratulate the Prime Minister and her colleagues on the historic agreement, to which she set her hand yesterday in Paris, for the peace of Europe. Its only flaw is that it does not take account of the Baltic states; perhaps the right hon. Lady will comment on that aspect. Nevertheless, this is an agreement which the right hon. Lady will be entitled to regard with a certain pride and satisfaction as she looks back on the twilight days of her premiership—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I hope that hon. Members will direct their questions to the substance of the statement and not to anything else.

Mr. Ashdown: As the Prime Minister turns her attention to the next important meeting on Europe, the intergovernmental conference in three weeks' time, will she reflect on the thought that it cannot be good for our country to be represented at that meeting by a Prime Minister who has lost her authority and a Government who have lost their way?

The Prime Minister: First, the position of the Baltic states will be dealt with in respect of minorities and possible conflicts. We are very much aware that in the new Europe many minorities will be feeling their nationalities once again. The old Helsinki accords still exist and they provide that there can be no change in borders without agreement. That is why the Baltic states and President Gorbachev and his Government are negotiating. We hope that those negotiations will end satisfactorily. We are well aware of the sensitivity of this matter not only from President Gorbachev's viewpoint but because of the origins of those Baltic states, which were transferred to Stalin at the beginning of the last war. The old Helsinki agreements and the new one deal with that.

On the intergovernmental conference, I seem to remember the Liberals supporting a socialist Government long after that Government had lost authority in the House and keeping it there for years. It is no good the right hon. Gentleman speaking in that way. The first eleven and a half years have not been so bad—and with regard to a twilight, please remember that there are 24 hours in a day.

Mr. William Powell (Corby): Does not my right hon. Friend deserve the wholehearted congratulations of the House and the country for her massive and sustained contribution over a long period which enabled this historic treaty to be signed yesterday?

The Prime Minister: I thank my hon. Friend. I also thank my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary and Defence Ministers. Our staunchness in defence and our resoluteness have brought this about—a staunchness in defence in which we were not supported by the Opposition. I do not believe that the agreements could have come about had we not been in power and had we not taken that view.

Mr. A. E. P. Duffy (Sheffield, Attercliffe): The creation of a CSCE mechanism is undoubtedly a historic step in the pursuit of European stability and security. But does the Prime Minister agree not only that its capacity to provide true European security lies in the far distance and that, as she said, NATO as a proven instrument will continue to be needed, but that the NATO of the 1990s will need to widen its focus and be more responsive to regional responsibilities?

The Prime Minister: Yes. I agree with the hon. Gentleman. We must continue to have NATO. It spans the Atlantic and brings United States and Canadian interests into Europe. It is vital that our defence is dealt with under NATO. It is also vital that the alliance should think about out-of-area problems of the kind that we face in Iraq and Kuwait following Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. The hon. Gentleman will recall that I mentioned that at a NATO summit in Scotland earlier this year.

I do not think that the CSCE can deal wi matters in the same way as NATO does. It can political aspects and I think that its great sig that it involves the 34 nations and is the only which the United States, western Europe, easte and the Soviet Union meet to discuss togethe have a great deal of influence on one another th discussions that will take place regularly amon Ministers, probably once a year among Government and among officials. The activities and the CSCE are complementary.

Mr. Nigel Forman (Carshalton and Wallingt welcome the historic agreement in Paris—espe aspect of it which made clear the primacy of t economy as the best means of creating pluralist former communist countries. But does my Friend accept that if she and her colleagu Community are to help the eastern Europeans s and effectively, it is most important that th follow a policy of constructive engagement and to the Soviet Union, as it is upon the Soviet mar many of the other countries depend for their ex and hard currency?

The Prime Minister: Yes. I thank my hon. F market economy is the essential economic under political freedom. Political freedom would not it were not underpinned by a market econom Europe, we follow a policy of very c engagement. We have know-how funds and sup countries through the European Community. recently announced a new know-how fund for Union. We are in great demand when it comes t teach those countries about privatisation. They we have succeeded. This is again something in have led the world and they are anxious to come from us and to learn more about management, keep closely in touch.

Dr. David Owen (Plymouth, Devonport) Helsinki process would never have achieved success without the values of the western democ the Prime Minister now carefully reflect on h safeguard the essential need for a large Community—democratic and market orient respects the nationhood of the countries that are

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to the Gentleman. In some ways, the declaration of P declaration of fundamental values to which we put our name in terms of not only descri enforcement. I also agree with the right hon. that it is important that we do not regard the C as an exclusive club but go on to widen it. therefore consider the strong nationalist feeli countries of eastern Europe that would like to EC was never meant to be an exclusive club; it to provide an example of liberty and the fr economy in practice so that its borders could b and so that we could take into the Comm countries of eastern Europe when they wished

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood express my warm appreciation to my right hon. for the work of all her Secretaries of State for D Foreign Secretaries who contributed to the ha yesterday—the signing of the treaty? Will my

Friend comment on the statement of the Hungarians in Paris about the demise of the Warsaw pact as a military institution? Does she welcome Hungary's wish to join the Western European Union as an associate nation?

The Prime Minister: Again, I am grateful to my hon. Friend. It was a very impressive meeting and clearly the newly free countries of eastern Europe feel that they will get a great deal of support from this new organisation and its regular meetings. With regard to the Warsaw pact, the Hungarian and Czechoslovakian people feel that it has outlasted its military usefulness. They were saying that it should be turned into an organisation that should discuss more political things. Some, I think, would wish to be associated with the Western European Union, but I think it advisable further to consult the WEU and those east European countries before we make any undertakings about it.

Mr. James Lamond (Oldham, Central and Royton): In trying to take to herself the credit for this historic agreement, haš the Prime Minister forgotten that when Harold Wilson signed the Helsinki Final Act in August 1975, the right hon. Lady, who was Leader of the Opposition at the time, took that opportunity to attack the Helsinki Final Act in the most scathing terms and denounced Harold Wilson and the Labour Government for having agreed to it? Does she now regret that?

The Prime Minister: I believe that, at that time——

Hon. Members: Ah!

Mr. Speaker: Order.

The Prime Minister: —the scepticism was justified. I must place in the Library or send to the hon. Member a copy of the speech that I made on that point. We seemed to have agreed with the division of Europe including the de facto position of the Balkans, the Baltic states, as part of the Soviet Union in return for commitments that were unlikely to be carried out. The hon. Gentleman will recall that for a very long time after Helsinki people remained in prison or psychiatric hospitals simply for the crime of claiming their basic human rights. There was no significant increase in travel. The Brezhnev doctrine continued to apply, and so on. It was not until President Gorbachev came to power that the Helsinki accords really began to have possibilities. It is also because some countries, especially the United States and ourselves, always, but always raised fundamental human rights cases whenever we met the Soviet Union. For a very long time, it looked as though the Helsinki accords would not be carried into practice. With regard to the long-term effect, I am the first to admit it and say that that was very good indeed.

Mr. Michael Morris (Northampton, South): Is my right hon. Friend aware that those of us who serve on the Council of Europe and therefore have contact with eastern and central Europe are perhaps more aware than many of the drive and commitment that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has put into ensuring this successful conclusion? Will she recognise that although the know-how fund and EC aid are important, countries like Bulgaria and Poland face a very difficult winter? Did anything come out of the charter agreement in Paris to provide particular help in the short term to those countries?

The Prime Minister: Not especially from the charter. I think that Hungary has already applied to join the Council of Europe and a number of others would wish to do so, to give them more contact with people who espouse western ideas, the ideals of democracy, human rights and the market economy. They are anxious to have far more contacts. With regard to aid, we are doing that through the EC. I saw the President of Bulgaria, which is urgently in need of practical advice and help on how to turn from a communist regime to a market economy, and I promised him that we would consider extending the know-how fund to Bulgaria.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): Is the Prime Minister aware that one of the most welcome passages in her statement is the commitment to the peaceful settlement of disputes and to conciliation and that that is in marked contrast with the attitude that she and the President take towards the dispute in the middle east? Even during the cold war, when President Reagan spoke of an "evil empire", there were summit meetings, Foreign Ministers' meetings, hot lines, negotiations and discussions, but, in the case of Iraq, none of that is permitted. There are no negotiations, no discussions and no diplomacy, although the view that there should be is widely shared in the world by, among others, the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath), Nelson Mandela, Willy Brandt and a range of world statesmen. Is the Prime Minister aware that the latest indications from the United States suggest that nearly three quarters of the American people do not want force to be used against Iraq? Is she aware also that the United Nations resolutions on Israel have been totally disregarded and not implemented at all and that this matter should also be handled by peaceful negotiation and conciliation?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman seems to forget that there was a brutal invasion of Kuwait by Iraq and that brutality and horrors continue. Is the right hon. Gentleman suggesting that there is any parallel between the invasion of Kuwait and the terrible brutalities that are taking place there, Grenada—the United States came out when democracy was restored—and Panama? It is totally utterly and palpably wrong. Fear stalks the streets in Kuwait. There is murder and brutality. Force has taken place. There was a military invasion. It is sheer appeasement and total thoughtlessness for the plight of those people that lead the right hon. Gentleman to say what he does. The situation must be reversed. The suffering of those people must be ended. We must release Kuwait and end the suffering of those people who are in hiding and who are waiting day by day to be brought back to freedom once again.

Sir Bernard Braine (Castle Point): Does my right hon. Friend recollect the clear statement that she made a few moments ago about the state of the Helsinki accord and respect for it in the late 1970s and early 1980s? Mr. Vaclav Havel, now President of the Czech and Slovak Republic, was thrown into prison for telling the truth—that President Husak of Czechoslovakia dishonoured his signature of the Helsinki accord. Czechoslovakia at that time had one of the worst human rights records in Europe. My right hon. Friend is absolutely right.

The Prime Minister: Yes. Not only President Havel but people in those organisations that were set up to monito

[The Prime Minister]

the Helsinki accords to see that they were applied were thrown into prison and we had to plead for them time and again to get them out from those countries so that they may once again enjoy freedom. Indeed, in 1980 the Soviet Union went into Afghanistan, totally and utterly against the spirit of the Helsinki accord.

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): I, too, was in Paris yesterday at the CSCE conference. We welcome the establishment of machinery to resolve and to deal with border disputes. I noticed that the Spanish Government raised the Gibraltar issue at the conference and I wonder whether the Prime Minister will indicate how she was able to respond to it.

Articles 2 and 3 of the constitution of the Irish Republic contain a territorial claim against the United Kingdom as a claim of purported legal right. It is now the only constitutional territorial claim in Europe and it is clearly contrary to the Helsinki and other agreements. What steps will the Prime Minister take, through the CSCE process, to have that claim withdrawn?

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Gentleman knows, we have been in continued negotiation with regard to Spain and Gibraltar, but the Government of Gibraltar are self-governing and we have not been able to resolve the problem satisfactorily. We shall continue to try to do so.

The matter of the Irish Republic has been raised, but not in this forum, and it is not thought that that infringes the Helsinki accords.

I hope that people in the Irish Republic and others in the EC will realise that Northern Ireland has full democracy and that everyone there has full rights to vote for representatives in this House and in local authorities. The problem there is different from some of the problems in other parts of the world.

Mr. James Kilfedder (North Down): As the representative of a separate political party, I congratulate the Prime Minister on her gallant efforts which have contributed to the ending of the cold war. I doubt whether there are many in this House or outside who would have believed that the cold war would have been ended in 1990. She confirms her position as the most eminent Prime Minister of this century.

Did the Prime Minister discuss with the other representatives at the Paris summit the latest offer from President Saddam Hussein, who is trying to play a cat-and-mouse game with human lives?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. I think that it was the staunchness of countries such as Britain and the United States, our belief in the values of fundamental human rights, democracy and the rule of law, our knowledge that socialist economics did not produce prosperity, but only central control which denies liberty and prosperity, and our willingness to fight the battle of ideas which eventually led to the crumbling of communism in the Soviet Union and in eastern Europe.

Saddam Hussein's offer gradually to release hostages between Christmas and March was utterly rejected as yet another example of playing games with human lives. We called for the release of all hostages immediately. No civilised Government should take hostages at all.

Mr. Jim Sillars (Glasgow, Govan): The R is aware that she and I are ideologically poles apart, but it would be churlish not to she has played a role in the rapprochement and eastern Europe, particularly as she was to spot that the west could do busin Gorbachev as he emerged to effective powe Union. But why is it that, at the end of the c all over Europe people are rejoicing at th conventional and nuclear weapons, on Scotland there is to be an increase in nucl with a "Thatcher", a "Hurd", a "Major" o Government putting four Trident subm Clyde or a Kinnock Government putting submarines on the Clyde? Where is the logi Who will those submarines target—those the Soviet Union queuing for a loaf of brea no one in western Europe or Scotland?

The Prime Minister: I know that we different. I did not know that we were different, but one always learns something is a fundamental part of NATO strategy th nuclear deterrent in submarines and in shor weapons and we shall continue to do that. W what may happen in the future and wha come about. If we had not maintained o should not have been able to respond to t middle east, and if we do not retain our nu there may come a time when we need it and late then to obtain it. It is vital always in de and justice to keep one's defences str nuclear.

Mr. David Howell (Guildford): Does Friend accept that she deserves much more Leader of the Opposition afforded her tod that she and her ideas have played in the lib freeing of eastern Europe? Will she confi Paris conference it was agreed that the C would be located in Prague? If that is recognise that that would greatly help to European democracies into the new archi new order of Europe?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to Friend. Every country in eastern Europe a the Soviet Union know the part that Brit They are aware of our staunchness in defen grateful to us for what we have done t achieve their liberty. The CSCE secreta Prague. It will be very welcome in that g again, it will involve eastern European more actively in the whole conciliation pr

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil Given the agreement to withdraw Soviet f Germany, upon whom are the short weapons now targeted? As they were origin hit East German or possibly Polish targe now wholly meaningless and irrelevant?

The Prime Minister: That must have be of the early 1930s. We do not know what w future. The weapons will be targeted on aggressor. We do not know what may

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invader or aggressor appeared or a great change took place but we had let the weapons go, we should be defenceless instead of having a strong nuclear deterrent.

Mr. Roger Knapman (Stroud): May I congratulate my right hon. Friend on her statement and the leading role that she has played in the negotiations? On that form will my right hon. Friend continue to bat for Britain with all the energy, vigour and determination at her command?

The Prime Minister: Yes. It requires great strength and great resolve. I believe that this Government have and will continue to have both.

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): Does the Prime Minister agree that one of the greatest problems in converting eastern European economies from controlled, centrally managed economies to market economies is the non-convertibility of those countries' currencies? When will something be done about that issue? Until something is done there will be precious little movement in the conversion programme.

On the institutionalisation of the CSCE, does the Prime Minister agree that we should give the matter further thought and discussion? Existing institutions in Europe, notably the Council of Europe, have facilities for including the Commonwealth countries and the United States in debates on OECD reports. There is absolutely no reason why the Council of Europe could not operate on behalf of the CSCE. Is the Prime Minister aware that if it does not, Europe will be littered with parliamentary institutions, such as the Western European Union, the Council of Europe, the EEC, the parliamentary body for the European Free Trade Association, the North Atlantic Assembly and now the CSCE? We really must have another think about it.

The Prime Minister: On the first question, convertibility of the currency is not the most difficult matter in eastern European countries. It is the fundamental change of attitude among people who have always been instructed to do things, have never been allowed to take any responsibility and are now being asked to change their whole approach. It is very difficult, even when talking to them, to put over the idea that they must find out what they can market, make it and then go out and sell in a way in which they have never done before. The change of attitude is the single most difficult matter.

The CSCE is the only institution which goes right across from the western coast of the United States to the eastern coast of the Pacific. I hope that the Council of Europe will take in the countries of eastern Europe. It will certainly do so before the European Community can do so. I doubt whether it will absorb the Soviet Union because that would make it so large, but I hope that the eastern European countries will join in. The importance of the CSCE is that it spans the United States, western Europe and the Soviet Union. Therefore, it gives us a greater debating and discussion role than any other forum.

Mr. James Hill (Southampton, Test): My right hon. Friend is to be congratulated. After many years of hard work we have achieved an extremely good agreement which has a tremendous impact on Europe. Perhaps I may ask about a possible parliamentary assembly for the CSCE. I agree with the hon. Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Ewing) that too many institutions are growing in Europe. Sometimes their work overlaps and sometimes they are extremely wasteful and costly. Would possible in future to centre on the CSCE, perhaps roles in it to the WEU and the Council of Europe? times we must bear in mind the need for a cr parliamentary assembly outside the European Parli to speak for the rest of Europe.

The Prime Minister: I thank my hon. Friend. No the remarkable events that have taken place would come about if Mr. Gorbachev had not become G Secretary of the Soviet Union. He came with a comp different approach and saw that communism denied dignity and prosperity. He realised that fundam changes had to be made and he had the courage to them and persist with them. Time and again repeated that that could not have come about withou We played quite an important role by giving him pla in the western world and saying that we could do bu with him.

I agree that we have rather a lot of parliame institutions. It would probably be more appropriate that there should be meetings of parliamentarians, pe once a year, rather than another institution. It was fe if we had meetings at Head of Government leve regular meetings at Foreign Ministry level, parli tarians could perform a role in teaching others. T precisely how our Parliament works and it is, after far the oldest Parliament and has the most fundam parliamentary and democratic institutions o Parliaments.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): The Minister rightly condemns brutality by occupation May I appeal to her not to forget the suffering people of the Punjab and Kashmir at the hands of security forces? In that respect what agreement d conference reach on safeguarding and enhancing the of those seeking political asylum?

The Prime Minister: I am very well aware problems in the Punjab and in Kashmir. We earnestly hope that they will be solved peacefully. have been trying for a long time in Kashmir, whic great problems. What was the second part of the Gentleman's question?

Mr. Madden: Political asylum.

The Prime Minister: We did not raise political a as such, although new problems arise because, w there used to be perhaps a few thousand people seeking political asylum, now there are many t thousands and the process is not really meant fo numbers. Perhaps many of them are not genuine re and we have to sort them, one from the other. The considerable concern about enormous moveme peoples, enormous waves of immigration, from north Africa or eastern Europe straight into w Europe in numbers with which we could not cope matter was discussed, but it is easier to discuss the pr than to deal with it. We shall continue to discu problem there and in the European Community therefore also relevant to border controls i Community.

Mr. Robert Banks (Harrogate): Does my right Friend agree that the cohesion of NATO has fundamental to the achievement of the signing

[Mr. Robert Banks]

conventional arms reduction treaty and that that treaty is a milestone in the history of the 20th century of which my right hon. Friend and other leaders can be proud? Does she also agree that the time may have arrived for us to start discussing the reduction of naval forces, particularly those of the Soviet Union and, in return, of NATO countries?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend that the cohesion of NATO has been absolutely vital. It has been the most successful defensive alliance in history and must therefore continue. That staunchness in defence, including the nuclear deterrent and the insistence of President Reagan on the strategic defence initiative, made the Soviet Union realise that, technologically, we would always stay ahead. It made the Soviet Union realise that it could not expect to achieve its objectives militarily and must turn round and start to negotiate in a totally different way.

We are not negotiating on naval forces. There would be considerable dangers if we did so, because, after all, the sea is our highway. We would have to bring reserves across the sea, whereas the Soviet Union could quickly bring materials up to the front from behind the Urals. We are realising now the immense difficulty of removing armour from West Germany to the middle east and the length of time it takes.

We should remember that we are in a different position from the Soviet Union with regard to our maritime fleets. We have a far greater need of them for reinforcement purposes than does the Soviet Union.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones (Ynys Môn): The Prime Minister has very eloquently and rightly talked about the new-found freedoms and democracy of eastern and central European countries. We all welcome those developments. By the same token, does not she also recognise the desire for self-determination by the historic nations of these islands, including Wales and Scotland?

The Prime Minister: I think that Wales and Scotland have done very well economically and in terms of their freedoms as part of the United Kingdom. I believe that the majority of the Welsh and Scottish wish to stay that way.

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): Does my right hon. Friend agree that, in effect, this week's treaty marks the end of the ideological division of Europe that has existed since the war? The end of that division also represents the triumph of the western values of freedom and liberal social market economics. Does she agree that that is a tribute to the European Community and NATO, which the Conservative party has supported steadfastly and consistently? Would she also issue a warning to many of the socialist parties on the continent——

Mr. Speaker: Briefly, please.

Mr. Taylor: —that are already investing in the CSCE process as some form of alternative to NATO for the resolution of disputes in the future? That can never be the case, as the League of Nations proved. We must keep NATO and continue to be its staunch defender as there are still risks ahead.

The Prime Minister: I agree that we must keep NATO. Given its tremendous success since the war in defending peace with freedom and justice, it would be quite absurd if it were to be disbanded. It also has the p American and Canadian forces in absolutely vital to keeping the peace i extending NATO's purposes to political main defence organisation and main con side of the Atlantic.

We must recognise that it is easier and the Soviet Union to give and to ge than it is to achieve economic liberty. Po be conferred in response to deman freedom cannot. One must learn ho Therefore, it means that those in the eastern Europe must learn habits that n never known. There is no history of ownership in many parts of the Sovi history of private property. It will take achieve economic freedom and people deal of help and tuition before they ar

Mr. Gavin Strang (Edinburgh, Ea Minister aware that many of us are tota the role that the Prime Minister is ascr the new Europe? Given that NATO wa western Europe against the threat fron and the Warsaw pact, and acknowle comments that the Prime Minister Warsaw pact in reply to my right hon. of the Opposition, would not it be p board the possibility that the CSCE n responsibilities for collective defence?

The Prime Minister: No, I still think defence through NATO and that it sh done that way. The CSCE consists NATO and the Warsaw pact repres better to achieve defence through a wel structure that has a proven record of su most people would follow that course

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): Is n aware that support for what she is doin generally, was, at my constituency e last night, warm, strong and positive much want her to carry on?

The Prime Minister: I thank my h that he will fight for those things as fie keep the military band in his constitue what he wants.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (W policy of constructive engagement—in on privatisation, moneys from the kr other moneys from the European d sufficient to deal with the problems Europe that might, in certain conditi not we look to what is happening in links between east and west give east advantage? Should not we consider de between western and eastern Europea level—local government, national Go and professional—to drag the eastern through the hoop before they have t given the difficult political conditions

The Prime Minister: One could go more things that we would like to do: a period when so many demands hav

west for help and finance; however, we cannot meet them all. In addition to privatisation and know-how, there are a number of joint ventures, but it is not always easy for those to operate between a free economy in Britain and the controlled economies that remain in some of those countries. Such countries cannot easily obtain the supplies that they are accustomed to obtain by simply ordering them from this country.

We are trying to arrange association agreements between the countries of eastern Europe and the European Community which will start to be negotiated next year. Beyond that, a good deal will come from companies in this country tying up with some companies in those countries. East Germany was very fortunate to be able to plug straight into a banking system, a legal system and a law of contract and tort—all the structures of democracy and the market economy. Those things are not yet in place in Czechoslovakia, Poland or Hungary.

Mr. John Browne (Winchester): Does my right hon. Friend accept that the Paris charter effectively announced the end of not only the cold war but the second world war? Does she accept that the resolution of and co-operation between the United States and the United Kingdom were crucial to the achievement of that goal and that it is likely to remain vital to the achievement of peace in the years ahead—especially in the countries outside the NATO area? Does she also accept that many millions of people think that her personal role was and remains vital to that achievement and hope that she will remain at the helm? They feel that, if she does not, the likes of Saddam Hussein—and other enemies of the United Kingdom—will heave a huge sigh of relief.

The Prime Minister: This year we have seen two fundamental developments. First, with the negotiations between Germany and the other countries involved in the last war, we have seen treaties and agreements that ended that war and the occupation of Berlin and East Germany after so many years. In a way, that was the post-war settlement for Germany.

In the CSCE talks, we saw the conditions that have come about as a result of the attitude that the communist countries took from the time of the Berlin airlift—an expansionist ideology, which they wanted to extend all over the world. Instead of coming out of the war into a disarmament period, we had to keep our armaments, set up NATO and keep our defences very strong. The lesson that we learnt is that we must always keep our defences strong, because we do not know what changes may come about—either in Europe or elsewhere in the world—which will be vital to our commerce and supply lines. My hon. Friend is right: this year, with President Gorbachev's new Soviet Union, we have seen Germany's post-war settlement and the end of the cold war.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): During the discussions on the Gulf was there any mention of remarks by the Defence Secretary that British troops in the Gulf would not understand the leadership challenge to the Prime Minister? Will the Prime Minister confirm that British troops in the Gulf are there to resist criminal aggression and to try to ensure that Kuwait is liberated and that they are not, in any circumstances, there to support one particular faction inside the Tory party?

The Prime Minister: During the CSCE process not in fact have much discussion on the Gulf discussions occurred mostly during the bilater when we all agreed that United Nations resolutio be upheld and Iraq must leave Kuwait. I am pro our forces in the Gulf will play a part in that, sh military option be used, and are already doing a job, as we would expect from the professiona British forces anywhere and everywhere.

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest): I congratulate the Prime Minister on her maj contribution to those important agreements. Wha be the contribution of the declaration on human the event of deadlock between the Soviet Un countries such as Latvia, Lithuania and Eston establishing their legitimate claims to sovereignt countries could not agree with the Soviet Union? W the mechanisms, through the CSCE, for resolv monitoring the inter-ethnic and inter-racial disp are becoming increasingly endemic throughout Europe?

The Prime Minister: The differences between t states and the Soviet Union would already be pa original Helsinki accords, when we said that no could be changed without agreement. My hon knows the specific position of those Governm countries, which are quite different from the rest in the Soviet Union. The differences are covere original Helsinki accords, which will also cover that may arise. Some such conflicts do not involve countries or countries that, like the Baltic states a are part of another country de facto, but not de j to resolve those differences that we wish to se conciliation and assessment of conflicts centr precisely what can be done about those problem we genuinely keep negotiations going until the co resolved.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Is the Prime aware that while she was attempting to sign away war in Paris, an Exocet missile was ripping its way Committee Room 12?

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman questions about what went on in Paris.

Mr. Skinner: I am keeping the Prime informed.

Mr. Speaker: I do not think that the Prime needs that.

Mr. Skinner: Is she aware that Ministers wer out with guilty eyes? Is she also——

Mr. Speaker: Order. This does the hon. Gentl credit. He must as a question about the substan statement.

Mr. Skinner: When she was speaking to the pe there, did she establish enough contacts to e ex-Prime Minister to travel the world? Is she pr accept the governorship of the central bank?

The Prime Minister: I note what the hon. G said. I also noticed that he seems to be training as —perhaps he thinks that he will lose his seat a Tory election, which we shall win.

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): We are pleased to have the Prime Minister back in triumph from Paris and to have her running the shop again, but I have to report that one or two people have been tampering with the stock in her absence. Is the Prime Minister absolutely satisfied with the verification of arms? Are our military advisers and yourself, Prime Minister, satisfied with the verification arrangements?

The Prime Minister: First, we are satisfied with the verification arrangements, which are detailed and some of them much more intrusive than ever before. I entirely agree with my hon. Friend that stock control is vital to the running of any successful business.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): What did the Prime Minister mean when, during the Paris conference, she said that more British service personnel were to be sent to the Gulf—when and how many? Does the Prime Minister realise that, given the latest estimates of a full-scale war meaning 400 British dead each day, drafting a political epitaph pales into insignificance compared with the real epitaphs now looming on the horizoin for tens of thousands of young men and women on all sides in the Gulf?

The Prime Minister: We are considering sending more troops to the Gulf. The United States is sending a great many more and it is entitled to expect that Europe will send some more. We should not leave it all to the United States. It is in all our interests to uphold international law in the Gulf. We have not yet decided how many troops to send, nor their composition. My right hon. Friend will make a statement as soon as we have decided precisely how many.

One can never make an assessment of the sort that the hon. Gentleman has given, entirely of his own accord. When the forces went down to the Falklands, we were very worried, as were all right hon. and hon. Members, but this country recovered the Falklands from invasion with the sad loss of 257 troops. We could not have foretold that number before our forces went down there. The hon. Gentleman should remember that if an aggressor gets away with this terrible invasion and brutality, he will do it again and far more lives will be lost than if he is stopped now.

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): While this historic agreement should be seen as a living memorial to those who perished while fleeing from political and religious tyranny to freedom in the west, will my right hon. Friend comment on reports in the press today that the number of artillery pieces reported by the Soviet Union was greeted with scepticism?

The Prime Minister: We have a problem with the data that must be verified if the agreements are to be carried out. As my hon. Friend knows, quite a lot of equipment has already gone behind the Urals—more than 65,000 pieces. There is a subsidiary agreement under which we should be able to see that a considerable number of them are destroyed, although they may be allocated to the Asian part of the Soviet Union. We have to watch the database very carefully and we shall do so.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Is not the Prime Minister guilty of double standards when she comes here talking about a treaty signing away the cold war, with its emphasis on the retention of fundamental human rights, while resolutely turning her face against the fundamental human right not to be threatened with mass extermination by nuclear weapons which are pointing at a country that is yet to be determined and announced by the Prime Minister? Are we safe in assuming that our nuclear weapons are not pointing at the Soviet Union? If the Prime Minister is so proud of having nuclear weapons, what does she say to the 139 non-nuclear nations which signed the United Nations nuclear non-proliferation treaty and which refuse to manufacture and deploy such weapons? Does she believe that she should honour and obey the treaty, which she says she supports, or does she recommend that those nations, too, should have nuclear weapons?

The Prime Minister: It is a question not of signing away the cold war but of recognising the end of the cold war, which I should have thought even the hon. Gentleman would welcome.

Nuclear weapons are the world's strongest deterrent. As Winston Churchill said, we should not give them up until we have a stronger one. Most people would agree that terrible though the dropping of both nuclear weapons on Japan was, the loss of life if they had not been dropped would have been infinitely greater.

Five countries already have nuclear weapons, besides possibly one or two more. We accept the nuclear non-proliferation agreement; the countries that have these weapons keep them under considerable restraint. They are a deterrent and I believe that they have been successful. They have made NATO successful and we should never have achieved the agreements that we have now unless NATO had been staunch, and that includes keeping nuclear weapons.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): Is my right hon. Friend aware that many of the citizens of this country who despaired during the decades of the cold war owe much to her and to Presidents Reagan and Bush and that they also remember how her policies and integrity were continually attacked by those who did not agree with the policies? Now that we see the Soviet Union holding out the hand of friendship and attempting to follow the road that we have travelled, should not we remember that the world still has lots of nuclear weapons and that——

Mr. Speaker: Briefly, please.

Mr. Walker: —although the agreement is very welcome, while there is instability we must keep up our guard?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend. It was strength and resolve, particularly during the last decade, which led to the agreement that we so successfully brought to a conclusion this week.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): What was wrong with the Prime Minister's statement was its ideological tinge. Does not she realise that market economies do not have to be capitalist economies? One can have socialist market economies and mixed economies. Capitalism is compatible with monopoly capitalism and dictatorship. If we are to build up unity in Europe, should not democrats be concerned about building up pluralism in economic as well as political affairs?

The Prime Minister: Capitalism is a necessary condition of a market economy and of liberty. It is a necessary but not a sufficient condition of liberty.

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): May I thank my right hon. Friend for her longstanding interest in human rights in the Soviet Union which has secured the freedom of many refuseniks? Does she agree that the present exodus from the Soviet Union would not be taking place without her determined pressure since she first met Mr. Gorbachev in 1984?

The Prime Minister: I thank my hon. Friend. As he knows, we have managed to get a lot of people out of the Soviet Union by raising cases. Both he and I know that a considerable number of people are still held in the Soviet Union who are unable to take advantage of the human rights clauses. We continue constantly to raise those cases.

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): Without overlooking blemishes, does the Prime Minister agree that during the cold war Turkey was a loyal and front-line ally and that she remains a loyal and front-line ally? What encouragement was the Prime Minister able to give to the Turkish Prime Minister about Turkey's admission to the European Community, subject to the very important question of human rights? Does she agree that it is important, as a matter of substance and of symbolism, that the European Community should accommodate Muslim as well as Christian countries?

The Prime Minister: I agree that Turkey has been a very staunch and absolutely vital member of NATO. As for the European Community, we have an association agreement with Turkey. It was one of the original association agreements that carried with it the right to membership. Turkey has applied for membership, but the hon. Gentleman knows that all the applications have been put on one side. We are prepared to operate the full association agreement, including the financial protocol. It is Greece which blocks the financial protocol. It has therefore deprived Turkey of a good deal of the help that would otherwise have been very beneficial to her.

Mr. David Tredinnick (Bosworth): Will my right hon. Friend accept my congratulations on the signing of the historic treaty in Paris which effectively brought to an end 40 years of cold war? Did my right hon. Friend discuss with President Gorbachev the possibility of Russian troop movements near the Iraq border and the impact that that would have on the thinking of President Saddam Hussein?

The Prime Minister: We did not discuss that matter, but I did discuss the United Nations resolutions with President Gorbachev. He supports fully the position adopted by the United Nations that Iraq must leave Kuwait.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): May I say that the whole House will admire the Prime Minister's guts, although I am not sure that they will look so pretty when they are spread out all over the floor. In view of the nice and welcome things that she said about President Gorbachev, is she aware—she certainly must be—that his political future is probably as uncertain as her own? With the coming of the Russian winter, which will create great food distribution and supply problems in the Soviet Union, can the Prime Minister tell us what talks took place in Paris about providing the Soviet Union with the aid that it so desperately needs if President Gorbachev is to stay at the head of the Soviet Union and maintain the momentum for peace in Europe?

The Prime Minister: We have taken the view that instead of just giving loans to the Soviet Union for the purchase of more consumer goods, we should concentrate any help that we give on such things as oil exploration, in which we have a good deal of expertise, and food distribution. That is one of the matters that will be considered when we have the IMF report.

BALLOT FOR NOTICES OF MOTIONS FOR FRIDAY 7 DECEMBER

Members successful in the ballot were:
Mr. David Amess
Mr. Ian Stewart
Sir Nicholas Bonsor

BILL PRESENTED

Community Charges (Substitute Setting)

Mr. Secretary Patten, supported by Mr. Secretary Rifkind, Mr. Secretary Parkinson, Mr. Secretary Hunt, Mr. Michael Portillo and Mr. Robert Key, presented a Bill to amend the law about setting substitute personal community charges under section 35 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow. [Bill 15.]

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

Ordered,

That the proposals described in the un-numbered Explanatory Memorandum submitted by the Department of Trade and Industry on 14th November 1990 relating to the Uruguay Round of multi-lateral trade negotiations shall not stand referred to European Standing Committee B.—*[Mr. Neil Hamilton.]*

Orders of the Day

Disability Living Allowance and Disability Working Allowance Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

4.46 pm

The Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Tony Newton): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

The Bill concerns disabled people and their needs—not only their need for help from the benefit system but, no less important, their wish for greater independence and for greater control over their own lives. The two new benefits that the Bill introduces are further building blocks in a strategy that began with the commissioning from the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys of a number of wide-ranging surveys of people with disabilities. In response to those surveys, we have already made many significant improvements in the help available to disabled people. This Bill will extend help to over 300,000 people, at a gross additional cost by 1993-94 of some £325 million.

In doing so, it breaks new ground in shifting the benefit system away from focusing exclusively on incapacity—on what disabled people cannot do—towards doing more to encourage people with disabilities to make the best of the capacity that they have—the things that they can and wish to do. In assessing entitlement, it seeks to give to disabled people a greater role, rather than relying almost exclusively on the assessments of professionals.

It is right to put the Bill's proposals in the context of other developments in social security policy for disabled people. When I introduced to the House in January of this year the Command Paper entitled "The Way Ahead: Benefits for Disabled People", I said that the Government saw three main strategic needs for benefits for disabled people. The first was to improve the balance of benefits available to people who are unable to work, and in particular to do more for those who are disabled from birth or early in life. The second was to improve, for those of working age and below, the coverage of help with the extra costs associated with disability. The third was to help those disabled people who can and wish to work by making it easier for them to take up and to keep jobs.

On the first objective, the intervening months have seen a wide range of important improvements. In April, we increased the disability premiums and income-related benefits by more than double the rate of inflation, giving an increase of £1·70 for a single person and £2·60 for a couple, to improve the help given to some 400,000 people. We also increased the disabled child's premium from £6·50 to £15·40 a week, thus giving substantial extra help to 20,000 families. At the same time, we scrapped the rule that prevented the payment of attendance allowance to children under the age of two. That directed a further £37·55 a week to 3,000 families with severely disabled babies. Also last April, we extended the mobility allowance, at £26·25 a week, as of right to people who are both deaf and blind.

Last month, we introduced a carers' premium of £10 into income support, housing benefit and community charge benefit, helping 30,000 people. Attendance allowance was made available to the terminally ill without the normal six-month waiting period. We expect 58,000 people to be helped by this measure.

Next month, we are introducing age-related addition to severe disablement allowance, which will give up to £10 a week extra at current rates to some 100,000 severely disabled people who do not qualify for the national insurance invalidity benefit and who are not receiving income-related benefits. Another 150,000 people will receive this amount as of right instead of a comparable amount of income-related benefit.

The House will recall that in my uprating statement last month I was able to announce five small but useful improvements in our provisions: an increase in the funding of the independent living fund to £62 million next year, making a twelvefold increase in less than four years; an additional grant of £1 million to Motability which has been widely and warmly welcomed; the extension of mobility allowance so that it can be paid to all double amputees from next April; a further increase in the invalid care allowance earnings limit from £20 to £30; and, not least in practical terms, to cope with some of the problems of stress arising from bereavement, that the carers' premium in income support will be paid for an extra eight weeks after caring ceases—for example, after the death of the person being cared for.

Against that background, the Bill introduces major measures to address the second and third of our objectives. The disability living allowance will restructure and significantly extend the help with the extra costs of disability.

The disability working allowance, which we renamed from "disability employment credit" following considerable consultation with people who work in the sector and disability organisations, will, for the first time, enable people with disabilities to work without suffering a drop in their income. I pay tribute to my right hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security and Disabled People and, without drawing attention to their location, to officials who have worked so hard on these proposals. I thank them for the work that they have done in taking us from the outline that we published in January to the Bill that is before the House today.

Clauses 1 to 5 introduce the disability living allowance. An important finding of the OPCS surveys was that the two existing extra costs benefits—attendance allowance and mobility allowance—were well targeted on the most commonly occurring of the disabilities that entail extra costs. That is why we have retained the existing qualifying conditions in the new DLA. Since evidence for the survey was collected, there has been a further huge growth of more than 50 per cent. in the number of people receiving those benefits.

Attendance allowance, which is currently worth £47·55 a week, is claimed at both rates by 795,000 people. Mobility allowance is claimed by more than 600,000 people. Allowing for the overlap in the case loads, about 1·3 million people are receiving extra costs benefits, and by 1992-93 we expect the figure to rise to 1·9 million. To put those figures in context—this is an important point, given some of the discussions that have taken place—the House should note that the OPCS found a total of fewer than 1·5 million people in its top four severity categories.

The OPCS identified the problem, which many hon. Members had identified in common-sense terms from their general experience of disability benefits, that the current

benefit system is based on too sharp a distinction between people whose disabilities are severe enough to qualify them for attendance allowance and mobility allowance, and those who just fail to qualify and get nothing. To tackle this problem, we are introducing two new lower rates of disability living allowance to cover care and mobility needs. Instead of the present cliff edge, there will be something more like a series of steps, thus giving greater recognition to the fact that disability is a matter of degree.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): Will the care component include visually impaired people, which is a matter of some concern?

Mr. Newton: I shall mention visually impaired people, particularly blind people, in relation to the mobility component. The hon. Gentleman will realise that, because of the way in which the criteria have been drawn, it is difficult to be specific. They have not been drawn in relation to specific types of disability. Much, therefore, will depend on the working of the detailed arrangements. My right hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security and Disabled People will have heard the hon. Gentleman's question and may comment further when he replies to the debate.

On the care component, people will be able to qualify for the new lower rate if they require attention for a significant portion of the day—in one or more aggregated periods—or if they are so mentally or physically disabled that they are unable to prepare a main meal for themselves. In the main meal test—I am aware that there has been some comment about this, so I shall say a word or two about it—we are seeking to adopt a new and more practical approach to bring into benefit an important group who do not have care needs related to their bodily functions but whose disabilities cause them difficulty in performing what to many of us are routine but important daily tasks.

The main daily meal criterion will provide a relatively simple test that is amenable to self-assessment and rapid adjudication. I should emphasise—I feel quite strongly about this, for a reason that I shall reveal in a moment —that we are talking about an assessment of whether a person could undertake such a task if he wished to do so, not about making him try to see whether he could do it. As the Minister for Social Security and Disabled People who abolished the old household duties test, which was associated with the benefit that was known as HNCIP to those of us who are familiar with the acronyms in this sector, I do not intend to reintroduce something like it in the context of these benefits.

For mobility, the new lower rate will be payable to people who are physically able to walk but who are so severely physically or mentally disabled that, when walking outdoors, they require the guidance or supervision of another person for most of the time. This will extend the mobility component—to some extent, this answers the question asked by the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley)—to people who are mentally handicapped or blind and to those who have a very limited physical capacity to walk.

The Bill provides for the new common qualifying period of three months, and for a test of whether the disability is likely to continue, for both components. The special rules for the terminally ill, waiving the need to satisfy the qualifying period, are extended to the mobility component so that, if the claimant qualifies, both components can be paid immediately.

New section 37ZD—I apologise for this, but at an early stage we hope to consolidate these matters, otherwise it will be increasingly difficult for anyone to follow disability benefits legislation—provides for the age limits in the benefit. As the House is aware, the aim is to target resources on younger disabled people, and DLA is aimed at people who become disabled before 65. However, people receiving DLA at 65 will continue to receive it and the Bill abolishes the upper age limit for mobility allowance. We shall also extend, across the board, the current provision whereby mobility allowance claims can be accepted up to the 66th birthday for disabilities commencing before 65.

Clause 5 gives wide powers to deal with transitional matters. Those are needed so that the Department can undertake the sizeable task of amalgamating and extending the two existing benefits while making sweeping changes to the adjudication system and bringing almost a further 300,000 people into entitlement to new rates. We shall do that and allow all potential new claimants an opportunity to claim the new lower rates from day one. That is, if I may say gently in the presence of the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris), a much more ambitious approach than that adopted when mobility allowance was introduced in 1976. The arrangements made by the then Labour Government meant that it was several years before all age bands were permitted to claim, with the result that fewer than 100,000 people were receiving mobility allowance when we took office.

Clause 6 introduces disability working allowance, which represents an important initiative to promote the independence of people with disabilities, giving sizeable numbers a new option of working without risking a drop in their income. Over the years, many of us have seen, as a matter of common sense, that too often people with disabilities who could do some work but could not earn enough on which to live were forced to remain entirely dependent on incapacity benefit. The aim of the disability working allowance is, for the first time, to offer the chance for disabled people to work to the full extent of their capacity and to have their earnings topped up by benefit. Even people who are so disabled that they can work only 16 hours a week will be able to qualify, which means that many part-time workers will be eligible.

The qualifying conditions for the benefit will be as easy as possible for potential claimants and staff to understand, so that claimants can work out whether they should claim and staff can put the benefit in payment quickly. The groups who will qualify for DWA will be identified by a simple qualifying benefit test whether they have been on a long-term incapacity benefit or are receiving an extra costs benefit. After satisfying that test, all the claimant will have to do on his first claim is certify that he has a disability or an illness that puts him at a disadvantage in obtaining employment. For subsequent claims, the claimant will be asked to fill in a simple self-assessment test, to show that he has one of a list of functional disabilities which are likely to make working difficult. Many people—those with the most severe disabilities—will not even have to do that, but will be automatically passported through it. Such an

[Mr. Newton]

approach will provide a quick and straightforward method of identifying disabled people who are at a disadvantage in the labour market.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): I am sure that this new allowance will be very much welcomed. Will my right hon. Friend confirm that people who have to risk giving up an existing benefit if they take a job are not likely to suffer if the job does not work out? Will he clarify the extent to which the cost of the new allowance will be offset by any reduction in benefits caused by people going back to work?

Mr. Newton: When I published "The Way Ahead: Benefits for Disabled People" and made a statement on it, I said that in broad terms we thought that the cost would be about neutral and that there would be savings on incapacity benefits offset by the payments of the new DWA—it is difficult to make a precise estimate, because we are talking about behavioural changes.

I hope that I carry my hon. Friend with me when I say that this is very much a benefit for which the case is not made in the simplistic terms in which we sometimes debate matters in the House—for example, that we are spending more money for a purpose. We are creating a more sensible benefit structure, giving disabled people an opportunity that is closed to them under the present system. It is on that basis that I should like primarily to argue the case for the benefit. It is not a great additional spending measure, but it will significantly improve the operation of the social security benefit system for disabled people. I shall comment later on the linking rule.

The income test for disability working allowance will be based on the family credit model, with the addition of an amount equivalent to the single person's disability premium in income support. Because of the addition of the premium, DWA will always be more advantageous than family credit for a disabled person with children. We were particularly anxious to ensure that there was not one of those tiresome "better buy" problems which mean that people have to weigh up which benefit they are better off claiming.

A key feature of DWA is the one raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham), with his usual acute perception of these problems—the linking rule. At present, a person receiving invalidity benefit or severe disablement allowance who decides to try his hand at work has, in effect, only eight weeks in which to decide whether he can cope. After that time, if he finds that he cannot cope and has to give up work because of incapacity, he has to spend 28 weeks requalifying for this old incapacity benefit. That rule can undoubtedly be a significant disincentive for disabled people who are contemplating a return to work.

We therefore propose a much more generous two-year linking rule. This will be a great help in building up the confidence of people who have never worked and in underpinning the confidence of those who are fearful of a return to the labour market after a long spell of incapacity. Such people will be able to try out the world of work, or re-try it, even for as little as 16 hours a week, reasonably secure in the knowledge that they will not have to suffer a drop in income through having to requalify for their old benefit if the attempt does not work out. I should like to make one simple but important point: no one who is on incapacity benefit will be forced to take up DWA—indeed, DWA will be available only to those who have found work and, by definition, wished to do so.

I should like to comment on a particularly important aspect of the procedures for assessment and adjudication where we are also proposing some significant improvements. The various differences—often extremely technical and obscure—between the assessment and adjudication arrangements for the existing mobility allowance and attendance allowance have long been a source of criticism by individuals, carers and disability organisations. That considerable number of current beneficiaries who get both existing benefits at the very least will have undergone two entirely separate medical examinations—often more. Despite the best efforts of the doctors who do that work, to whom I pay tribute, the process is sometimes seen as unnecessarily humiliating or intrusive.

Our emphasis in the Bill is very much on claimants' own perception of the problems that their disabilities cause them. I am convinced, as is my right hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security and Disabled People, that it should be possible to determine a sizeable proportion of claims without the need for a special medical examination, let alone two.

For the new benefit, we want to make the whole thing easier for claimants in three main ways: first, by enabling them to make a single claim covering their mobility and their care needs, instead of two separate claims; secondly, by giving them the opportunity to give us a fuller account of the effect that their condition has on their lives; and thirdly—this particularly important point picks up recommendations that have been urged upon us over a period—giving the opportunity to marshall evidence about their condition from third parties who are involved in their care—their GP, health visitors, district nurses, relatives or other carers.

We believe that this will also give us a better picture of the circumstances than the snapshot of a Department of Social Security medical examination, which is frequently all we have now, so that adjudication officers have a better basis for their decisions. It will, of course, still be open to a claimant to seek a medical examination if he wishes rather than filling in what will inevitably be, in the light of what I said, a rather longer claim form. I acknowledge that, in a proportion of cases, we shall still need some further evidence which may be obtainable only by a specially conducted medical examination.

I am encouraged, as is my right hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security and Disabled People, by the helpful and positive response that our first outline of these new assessment proposals and adjudication procedures received when we sent out a consultative document a few months ago. As we turn this legislation into practical working mechanisms, I want that consultation process to go further, so that people with disabilities and the groups who represent and lobby for them can help to fashion strictly practical elements such as the claims pack and the claiming process, which will be important to the success of the new benefit.

Sir David Price (Eastleigh): My right hon. Friend promises excellent progress. Will he go one stage further and tie that up with the personal assessment that will be required under care in the community by local social services? There could be one major assessment of the

individual concerned, the family and the carers, so that one could get a passport of entitlement through social security benefit and local authority care alike.

Mr. Newton: That is a characteristically interesting idea from my hon. Friend, who takes such a close interest in these matters in his Select Committee role. I shall certainly consider what he has said, although I should point out that, whereas I hope that the new benefits will be introduced in April 1992, the new care in the community arrangements are not now due to be introduced in their full form until April 1993, so there is a slight disjunction. I can give my hon. Friend the general assurance that we are most anxious to reduce the hassle—perhaps a word I over-use in the Chamber—that the assessment and adjudication of help for disabled people so often entail. For that reason, I welcome my hon. Friend's suggestion, even though I cannot "go snap" on it this afternoon.

As a related and further improvement which has been widely welcomed, we will be introducing a right of appeal to an entirely new form of social security appeal tribunal —a disability appeal tribunal—which will be the third tier of adjudication for both benefits, the second being a new form of quick review of initial decisions where they are queried. Again we are determined that, besides the legally qualified chairperson, who it is right to have, and medically qualified member, who it is right to have, there should, wherever possible, be a third person who either has practical experience of the needs of disabled people or is himself disabled. The essence of our approach at all levels is that, in many cases, it is not highly technical or difficult medical judgments that need to be made—it is, above all, judgments about the effect that a condition has on a person's life.

We are, of course, aware that there will sometimes be a need for specialist medical knowledge—in particular about entirely new conditions or syndromes—which goes beyond what we can expect of the Department's medical advisers. Clause 3 provides for a Disability Allowance Advisory Board to provide expert advice on specifically medical matters relating to DLA and residual attendance allowance only. The board will have no adjudicative function, unlike the current attendance allowance board. It will help to write a disability handbook for adjudication officers and provide ad hoc advice to the Department's medical advisers.

In the 11 years since the Government took office, we have already seen a huge improvement in the spread and coverage of social security help for disabled people. The number getting attendance allowance has risen threefold, from 265,000 to 795,000. The number receiving mobility allowance has risen sixfold, from 95,000 to 615,000. The number of carers getting invalid care allowance has risen more than twentyfold, from 5,000 to 130,000. This expansion, with other changes and improvements, has helped to more than double social security spending in this area, after allowing for inflation, from just over £4 billion to well over £8 billion.

This Bill, together with the many other improvements of the past year, builds on that——

Sir Eldon Griffiths (Bury St. Edmunds): I gather that my right hon. Friend is reaching his peroration. Before he does so, may I thank him and acknowledge the immense achievements that he has chronicled? I also ask him to take on board the further point that, in addition to providing disability living and disability working allowances, we should, as far as possible, help the voluntary sector, which also assists disabled people. That is particularly true in respect of disabled sports, and I hope that he will encourage those who are trying to assist disabled people, through voluntary efforts, in sport and recreation—whether in the special olympics or in other activities.

Mr. Newton: I can unhesitatingly give my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) that assurance. When I was Minister with responsibility for disabled people—it is now nearly six years ago—I actively sought to encourage and promote such activities. On one occasion, I went to the games for disabled people at Stoke Mandeville hospital. I know that the present Minister for Social Security and Disabled People puts a lot of his time into the matter. I have no doubt that there will always be requests for increased Government grants to such organisations and we shall not be able to satisfy all those demands, although we shall certainly continue to do everything that we possibly can.

As my hon. Friend rightly divined, I was approaching the end of my speech; indeed, I was in the middle of my last sentence, which I shall now repeat. This Bill, together with the many other improvements of the past year, builds on the achievements that we have already made in a way which I believe the whole House will welcome.

5.14 pm

Mr. Michael Meacher (Oldham, West): I am sorry to disappoint the Secretary of State, but I must tell him that when I had finished studying the Bill I recalled what was said of Napoleon III—that the most impressive thing about him was his name. The same could be said of the Bill. It seems that the less a measure contains, the more grandiloquent is its title.

The first part of the Bill is largely concerned with the amalgamation of two existing benefits. The second part is so significant as to involve no net extra expenditure, however much it may improve the ability of disabled people to get back into the labour market, which was the gloss that the Secretary of State put upon it. Having waited 10 years for the Bill—five years while the Government attended to the economy and another five while they procrastinated with half a dozen Office of Population Censuses and Surveys studies—disabled people expected a great deal more from it. They will be bitterly disappointed that it is so thin and misleading.

The only people who come out of the matter really well are those in the Government's public relations battalions. To think up the title of a new disablement living allowance to describe the existing attendance and mobility allowances is a stroke of evil marketing genius. The aim was presumably to put across to the general public the idea that a sort of disablement benefit or disablement costs allowance is being introduced, even though the Bill clearly does nothing of the kind. In fact, the extension of two existing benefits, paid to more people but at a lower rate, along with the common assessment and adjudication procedure—which the Secretary of State spent some time explaining and which we welcome—could have been achieved without the need to sell the provision as a new benefit. I submit that it is only the PR exercise that required the measures to be dressed up as a new benefit and sold as a package within a Bill.

[Mr. Michael Meacher]

Although it is a star turn for Government propaganda, the bundling together of two benefits will produce many difficulties. People will be puzzled about which part will be available for them to claim after the age of 65, whether parts will cease to be paid after 65 and why, if one can apply for one part after 65, one cannot apply for the other. Moreover unbundling will still be necessary. Motability, the independent living fund and local authorities will all need to know who is receiving what part of the mobility allowance and the attendance allowance. As the Secretary of State knows, Motability can only finance contracts based on the existing mobility allowance, the independent living fund will only help someone who is on the higher rate attendance allowance and local authorities treat mobility allowance and attendance allowance differently in their means test. That is why the point made by the hon. Member for Eastleigh (Sir D. Price) is worth considering. The bundled benefits will have to be unbundled so that everyone knows what the components are, and it does not appear that that information will be automatically supplied.

Another major flaw in the Bill is its failure to recognise the range of extra costs that disabled people have to meet. That is a fundamental point. The two modest extensions of mobility allowance and attendance allowance acknowledge the existence of care-related and mobility-related extra costs alone, but disabled people have a range of other costs which cause them higher expenditure, and people with other types of extra costs are left wanting by the Bill. There are several other causes of extra higher extra costs besides disabilities of locomotion and personal care. The OPCS referred to a long list of problems including digestion, disfigurement, behaviour, continence, reaching and stretching, and dexterity. As the Secretary of State follows the OPCS so slavishly with regard to costs because that suits his and the Treasury's interests in terms of lower public expenditure, why does he ignore the OPCS's more fundamental point about needs just because it would cost much more to recognise the truth about needs?

The levels of proposed benefit entirely contradict any illusion that the extent of extra costs facing disabled people is recognised by the Government. Many people would argue that existing levels of mobility and attendance allowance are already insufficient to meet the extra costs associated with just those two types of need.

Far from increasing the levels to cater for other forms of extra costs, there is a new lower level for each component at the derisory rate of just £10 per week. That new rate of £10 per week does not cover people who are marginally disabled and require just a small topping up of income. With regard to mobility allowance, it covers people who are able to walk but who, as the Secretary of State said this afternoon, are so severely physically or mentally handicapped that to take advantage of that faculty out of doors they require guidance or supervision from another person most of the time. They will get £10 per week. With regard to attendance allowance, the Government apparently believe that £10 is appropriate for people who require help from another person in connection with bodily functions for

"a significant portion of the day"

or who

"cannot prepare a cooked main meal for themselves if they have the ingredients."

How many Conservative Members who support thi believe that they could get by with that degree of disa on only £10 per week?

I recognise that the Government have based the fi on the extra cost data set out in the family expend survey and the OPCS report, both of which found disability-related expenditure was low. The Govern initially greeted that with glee, but when we think ab there is a good reason for the conclusion. The f expenditure survey in particular made the stu discovery that

"spending on disability is constrained by income."

If we put that crudely, it means "If you haven't got it can't spend it." I imagine that even the housewife Grantham would have agreed with that until she seduced by the Lawsonian credit binge. That important point.

Mr. Thurnham: The hon. Gentleman says, "If haven't got it, you can't spend it," but is that not ex what the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Be said when she described how Labour would fun proposals? Did she not say that these were desirable and something that Labour would hope to do as reso allowed? Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will make clea much money the Labour party would put on the ta fund its proposals.

Mr. Meacher: We are discussing the Government' I will refer to the Labour party proposals later. I as from the hon. Gentleman's intervention that embarrassed that the Government are being so nigg in terms of the amount that they are putting on the It is the Government's responsibility to lay out proposals for the disabled. Their proposals are extr mean and I believe that the hon. Gentleman pro agrees with me.

The OPCS found that disabled adults spent on av only £6·10 extra per week. Other research, however— not say independent research as I shall refer to the s in a moment and the Secretary of State is aware of it considered the actual extra costs of disabled daily livi particular, I refer to a pamphlet published b Disablement Income Group in February en "Short-changed by Disability," which found that th extra cost was five to seven times that quoted by the O I am not so naive as to suggest that the Secretary of will readily accept the DIG figures, but he would advised to dismiss them out of hand. No one who anything about disability would accept that the figures are closer to the reality of the position.

There are several other disturbing aspects t structuring of the misleadingly entitled disablement allowance. For instance, the Bill provides that awa both the mobility and attendance allowance compo must be for the same period. I imagine that that will that some disabled people will find that the award attendance allowance for a shortish period will pr their getting a Motability car. Another distressing which is meant no doubt to keep costs down rathe to meet need when it arises, is that people have to b disabled before the age of 65 in order to benefit. The of people who become disabled after that ag majority—are simply ignored.

It is also dismaying to realise that the Bill offers n more for severely disabled people receiving bo mobility and attendance allowances, although it ha

widely shown that many of those severely disabled people incur many other extra costs. If the Secretary of State needs proof of that—I do not suppose that he does—payments from the independent living fund show it to be true. Yet the Bill contains nothing more for those people.

The Government's objective for the DLA was, above all, simplicity. In section 4 of "The Way Ahead," the Secretary of State wrote:

"We must be confident that when it is introduced, the Disability Allowance is easy to understand."

That has been echoed in ministerial replies to correspondence stating that the Government

"aimed to provide a more simple and coherent system of financial help."

I can only observe that three levels of attendance allowance and two levels of mobility allowance will involve 11 different benefit combinations.

Mr. Newton *indicated assent.*

Mr. Meacher: I note that the Secretary of State assents to that. The combinations range from being ineligible for both benefits to being eligible for both at the top range. Even that might be relatively easy to accommodate if there were only one criterion for assessment with 11 different levels or degrees, but there are nine different criteria, several with different degrees. If the Government wanted to scale new peaks of complexity, they have succeeded in this Bill.

Mr. Newton: I know that the Gentleman is seriously interested in the problems that we are discussing today, and I would not wish to pretend otherwise. However, I must make the point that this is an area in which we must draw a balance between an administrable benefit which can be made to work in practice and one which takes into account every conceivable factor. How does the hon. Gentleman square what he is saying now with what he said 10 minutes ago about how this, that and the other had not been taken into account in the structure of the new benefit? If we were to follow the track that the hon. Gentleman urged on me 10 minutes ago, we would have ended up with a benefit so complicated that it could not be understood or administered.

Mr. Meacher: The right hon. Gentleman misses the point. Ten minutes ago, I said that several other facilities could have been provided by the disablement living allowance but they have clearly not been provided because it would cost considerable extra sums of money. I am talking now about a quite different matter—the way in which the measure has been structured. Although I am sure that the Government wish it to be simple, the right hon. Gentleman must realise that it is far from simple and it is complex. Of course, that may also have someting to do with money. I appreciate that the right hon. Gentleman constantly has to struggle to improve the benefit structure and the social security system with virtually no new money from his colleagues in the Treasury and the Government. I see from the right hon. Gentleman's expression that he assents to that and I am sorry about his position.

Mr. Newton: I am not having that, and I am not assenting to it. In the next two or three years, the Bill will involve more than £300 million of new money. In the past decade there has been an increase in expenditure—I touched on this and gave the reasons for it—of about £4 billion per year at today's prices.

Mr. Meacher: I shall refer to money later. Perhaps I should move on. The right hon. Gentleman is talking about three years' time. That is the point at which extra expenditure reaches a peak. In fact, it is just under £300 million. Moreover, the right hon. Gentleman does not go on to say that, thereafter, the net extra amount for the disabled, taking account of cuts through reduced earnings allowance and, in particular, the additional component of the invalidity pension, will produce a remarkable falling off and a negative effect in the next century. It is fair to mention the £300 million extra in three years, but does the right hon. Gentleman accept that it will be down to nothing by the year 2000 and that we are talking about a minus figure of £1 billion per year 10 years into the next century? Those are the facts.

With regard to the disablement working allowance, in the section on the financial effects of the Bill—again, the right hon. Gentleman hinted at this although he did not use these words—the Government say that

"the gross cost of around £85m by 1993/4 will be offset by a reduction in payments of other benefits."

In other words, it is such an important new measure that it requires no new net expenditure. I repeat that to get significant numbers of disabled people back into work—not just a few thousand but a few hundred thousand—requires considerably more than no new net expenditure.

The principal defect of this part of the Bill—I may be wrong, but I will argue it both ways and we shall see which is right—is that it appears to use passporting benefits, that is, attendance allowance, mobility allowance and constant attendance allowance, to identify disabled people. If that is so, many blind or partially sighted people and many deaf people who do not receive any benefit on account of disability will not be entitled to disablement working allowance either, even though their disabilities unquestionably put them at a disadvantage in obtaining work. Other disabled people—and there are many others—will also be left out.

I recognise that that interpretation of the Bill, which I believe is correct, is slightly different from that which appears in the note on disability working allowance that the Government published this month.

Mr. Newton *rose*——

Mr. Meacher: Perhaps I anticipate what the Secretary of State will say. That suggests that a self-declaration, which the right hon. Gentleman emphasised today, of disadvantage in obtaining work is all that is required for the first six months of an award if a claimant had been receiving invalidity benefit, severe disablement allowance or income support with a disability or severe disability premium. Perhap that is the correct version.

Mr. Newton *indicated assent.*

Mr. Meacher: In that case, I shall argue what I believe to be the Government's motive. If that is the case, as I thought that it probably was, it suggests that the Government's agenda is to get as many disabled people as possible off invalidity benefit because, as we know, following the National Audit Office report, the Government are alarmed at the cost and the number of those on invalidity benefit. That is somewhat different from what the Secretary of State said a moment ago about his pleasure at how many extra sums are being spent on the disabled. The Government are very concerned about the rising number of people getting invalidity benefit. Having

[Mr. Meacher]

made it very easy to sign away the right to long-term benefit, the Government then made it much more difficult to sign back on. That is probably a major motive behind the disablement working allowance, and disabled people need to take that point clearly on board.

The other major point that I stress is that the applicable amounts are far too low. You would expect me to say that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I repeat it because I believe it and I know the disabled people whom the measure affects will say it with great feeling. For example, there is just over £37 for single claimants. That is extremely low by any standards. Equally, the proposed threshold levels are extremely low—just over £34 for single claimants and higher, of course, for married couples. Also, the capital disregard with its £8,000 cut-off point takes no account of the extra need for capital that many disabled people have compared with non-disabled people.

It has been carefully worked out to my satisfaction that the illustrative figures for the disablement working allowance show that, for a single person, earnings as low as £87 per week would still result in no disablement working allowance. In effect, the disablement working allowance will give some people who are partially capable the option of exchanging poverty-level benefit for poverty-level wages. That is the net effect of the way in which the measure is construed.

The Bill is not impressive and it must be seen against the background of the major overall cuts in benefit, to which I have already alluded, that the Government are planning in the next decade. I have made the point that, although there will be an immediate increase in the next three years, the total will steadily decline to a net loss of more than £500 million per year by the year 2000, declining further into the next century until, by the year 2025—that is a long way off, but the Government plan that far ahead, just as they did when they tried to abolish the state earnings-related pension scheme—according to the Government's own figures, the net cut in all benefits to the disabled will be £1·5 billion per year. That is the background against which we must judge the Bill—a £1·5 billion per year cut by the time we reach the second and third decades of the next century.

Not only is that a scandal but the scale of the cuts calls into question the Government's motive in announcing the proposals in "The Way Ahead" and introducing the Bill today. The proposals can now be seen as little more than a smokescreen to conceal the most savage cuts in disability benefits on record. The Bill not only fails to provide the comprehensive disability income to which we are pledged, but it does not even begin to match up to its title. It does not offer a disablement living allowance and it does not offer a disablement working allowance—it is merely a limited gesture from a dying Government.

5.38 pm

Sir David Price (Eastleigh): In supporting the Bill, I draw the attention of the House to the last report which we on the old Select Committee on Social Services presented to the House in our series on community care. Those who follow our work will know that it was our seventh report on community care and that it was entitled "Social Security for the Disabled". It bears direct substance of today's Bill. I should like, th remind the House of some of the things we sa

We welcomed the statement of principles security help for disabled people contain Government's policy statement entitled Ahead". We supported the Government in aims. I shall remind the House of the important. They were, first, to improve the help with the extra costs of disability; second incentives for disabled people to take paid e and, thirdly, to provide income for disabled cannot work. It is against those three agreed a House must judge the Bill's relevance and effi

The Select Committee's biggest concern w costs incurred as a direct result of disability a are assessed—a matter which was touched on Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher). T Population Censuses and Surveys produced fi extra costs of disability which all th organisations found, in the words of the I Income Group, to be "surprisingly low". Th critical of the methodology adopted by th attempting to assess those extra costs.

Ian Bruce, the director general of the Roy Institute for the Blind, summed up the matter v said:

"So many disabled people have low incomes, them, 'How much more money do you spen because you are disabled?', they may never h opportunity to spend the money to start with . . . people do not go out very much because they c taxis. Now if you ask them how much extra th travel or transport, they might say not very muc because they have never had the money to do i

The same view has been expressed recently which said:

"It is certainly inappropriate to base prop interpretation of research into the extra costs of d judges the need for extra cash by reference to which the extra cash is spent. Obviously, if you d cash, you can't incur the cost."

The same point was made by the Royal As Disability and Rehabilitation, which critici because it

"fails to address the costs of disability other t mobility cost."

It said:

"Disabled people incur many other costs"— the hon. Member for Oldham, West made th —

"besides care and mobility e.g. diet costs, high higher than normal heating costs, the cost communication, the cost of domestic help and cl

Despite all that, paragraph 4.3 of "The says that the Government are satisfied with levels of attendance allowance and mobilit They say that they are "more than sufficient" extra costs associated with disability, as ide OPCS reports.

In paragraph 4.6—it is not my view—it s

"The Government considers, and the O confirm, that for the great majority of disabl rates of Attendance Allowance and Mobility All generous allowance for variations around the of extra spending associated with disability— "identified by the OPCS."

The Select Committee was clear that the benefits could be considered a "generous allo if the low estimates of extra costs made by t

accepted without question. I do not accept them without question. All my experience tells me that they are gross under-estimations, arising largely because of the methodology adopted by the OPCS—that is, trying to identify extra expenditure for people who have not got the cash to spend in the first place. It is a measure of what happens —I accept that—not a measure of need. That is the fundamental difference. I am therefore disappointed that the Government propose to set the rates for the new disability allowance, as for the old allowances, on the basis of the OPCS research.

The Select Committee was convinced that there were sufficient reservations, not least from the OPCS itself, to warrant further research specifically into the extra costs of disability. That is why we made the specific recommendation that the Government should conduct and publish ongoing research on the actual and potential costs of disability, in conjunction with various organisations representing disabled people, to inform future policy decisions about assistance for disabled people. I hope that the House and, above all, the Government will accept our recommendation. We all know how difficult it is to be precise in this matter, so it is not being unduly controversial or aggressive to ask the Government to accept our recommendation.

We could not accept the logic used by the Government in making changes to the severe disablement allowance. As the House knows, SDA is paid at only 60 per cent. of the rate of invalidity benefit. We welcomed the decision to pay age-related additions to people disabled in earlier life, but we fail to see the logic in denying that small bonus to people receiving SDA for other reasons whose needs, through disability, are presumably just as great. We therefore recommended that SDA should be increased to the same level as invalidity benefit.

That would concentrate resources on the most severely disabled people and would create more equal treatment in the social security system for people prevented from working by the same degree of disability whether or not they qualify for invalidity benefit. Our recommendation is in accordance with the Government's strategy, as identified at the beginning of my remarks, to redress the balance of help for disabled people which is at present heavily weighted on the side of those who have worked for a reasonable time.

Therefore, I hope that during the Bill's passage the Government will accept the logic of our recommendations. Such measures would not need primary legislation. They could be simply implemented during the annual uprating of benefits.

Our fifth report was devoted entirely to the role of carers and their problems. We concluded that the proposals in the community care White Paper and their greater emphasis on informal care at home would, among many other things, require the continuing extension of benefits for carers. The evidence that we received and the experience of the independent living fund suggested that there was a large amount of unmet need. Those of us who have been involved in caring will know that from our own experiences. We recommended that as part of their longer-term consideration of benefits for disabled people the Government should consider a number of important proposals for improving the lot of carers as resources permit. Those are outlined in the report.

First, we suggested that invalidity care allowance should be paid at the same rate as invalidity benefit and the retirement pension. It would have to be decided whether that would be available only to carers with contribution records, such as IVB, or to all carers on a non-contributory basis. I recommend the latter. If the latter logic and fairness would demand that the non-contributory severe disability allowance should also be uprated. I have already outlined the reasons for that.

Secondly, eligibility to invalid care allowance should be extended to all those caring for disabled people for 35 hours a week or more. That is to define the criterion in terms of the characteristics of the carer rather than the pure medical condition of the cared-for. Attendance allowance and the new lower rate of disability allowance should provide automatic evidence that that criterion is fulfilled—again trying to reduce the bureaucracy—but a direct test of caring could also be accepted. That is the direction in which we should move.

Thirdly, we should pay invalid care allowance at the rate of sickness benefit to carers during the six-month qualifying period for attendance allowance—three months under the new disability allowance.

Fourthly, we should extend the time period for invalid care allowance to include the six-month period after caring ceases. We hear some sad stories about people who have devoted many years caring for a relative whose allowance is terminated immediately their relative dies.

There are many other proposals with which I shall not detain the House now. I merely recommend our report to the House. If I may humbly suggest it, it is worth debating in its own right.

I could say a great deal more, but I promised to be brief. In conclusion, I welcome the Bill as far as it goes. I have identified at least three major matters on which the Government should go much further. I shall continue to press the Government, as I have always done since I came to the House, to maintain the momentum of progress. Nevertheless, it would be churlish of me not to recognise the progress that has been made in developing public policy for the disabled in the thirty-five and a half years during which I have had the honour to be a Member of the House. I am reminded of the words of Arthur Clough:

"For while the tired waves, vainly breaking,
Seem here no painful inch to gain,
Far back through creek and inlets making
Comes silent, flooding in, the main."

The incoming tide is in favour of the disabled. The Bill is one wave in that tide, but we need many more.

5.50 pm

Mrs. Sylvia Heal (Mid-Staffordshire): The debate has a thread in common with other debates in the House. Ministers come to the Dispatch Box and make statements about their concern for the disadvantaged groups in our society—the sick, the elderly or people with disabilities. The Government may have commissioned reports. They may await the results of surveys and reviews. Needs and problems are identified. Solutions and suggestions may well have been offered. Professionals and voluntary groups may or may not have been consulted, sometimes to find that the advice they offer is ignored.

Successive Ministers have spoken of the aim

"to introduce a coherent system of cash benefits to meet the cost of disability."

Yet their actions fall far short of that. The OPCS survey, which has already been referred to, and voluntary groups such as the Spastics Society, Disability Alliance, the Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation, the Royal

[Mrs. Sylvia Heal]

National Institute for the Deaf and the Royal National Institute for the Blind have highlighted the need for a comprehensive disability benefit. Yet the proposals in "The Way Ahead" do not represent a full review of the benefits system for people with disabilities.

I appreciate that the disabled living allowance and the disabled working allowance will help some individuals, but they are not comprehensive enough and, as has already been said, do not meet all the extra costs incurred by people with disabilities. I regret that pensioners over the age of 65 who develop difficulty with walking—as the result of either an accident or the onset of some disease or illness—will still not receive any extra financial help. Such people may have to remain housebound. The Bill contains no changes that will help them. They may have a friend or neighbour who is 64 years of age or younger and qualifies for additional help. Is there any fairness in legislation if it treats people in that way?

What of elderly deaf people whose sight becomes impaired after their 65th birthday? That is not unusual. It may happen as a result of the onset of diabetes and glaucoma. They will not be eligible for the additional benefit. They will receive no extra help from this Government. Will people who are deaf and blind still be eligible for the higher rate of attendance and mobility allowance?

The disability working allowance is means-tested—we are becoming used to that under this Government. Do the Government deliberately set out to add to the difficulties and humiliation of people with disabilities? I ask that question because, until the end of last month, people could apply for reduced earnings allowance if they were injured at work or following the onset of a prescribed industrial disease. They could obtain that benefit as of right, whether or not they were working. It was not means-tested.

The proposed benefit—the disability working allowance—is intended to encourage people to return to work. Despite some of the thin assurances that we have had this afternoon, I and many others fear that it could also be used to take people off incapacity benefits such as invalidity benefit or severe disablement allowance and put them into low-paid jobs.

The emphasis will be less on dealing with poverty among disabled wage earners and more on providing an incentive payment for people with disabilities who are not working but who are thought to be partially able to do so. It will reduce some disincentives and financial penalties for some people entering the work force but the numbers will be small. It remains to be seen whether it will help those who wish to work and can find suitable work, or whether it will be a means of putting pressure on people to work regardless of whether it is truly helpful to them.

The way in which the disability working allowance will work may lead to inequitable treatment of poor disabled earners who have not come within the benefits system and those who have received benefit. As it is a means-tested top-up, the allowance contains certain inherent difficulties. The withdrawal rates, especially when combined with other means-tested benefits, will impose a poverty trap if they are too rapidly imposed, so people will gain little from an increase in earnings. Help from the Department of Employment with the extra costs of employment falls far short of the needs of some individuals with disabilities. Such people may include those with cerebr communication difficulties. Again, that is no combination. The availability of a commun may not be sufficient. Often, another person act as a facilitator. In no way are those cost Department of Employment.

The current legislation applies only to peo work for 16 hours or more. What about th capable of working for less than 16 hours per people with disabilities are capable of workin more than two hours a day at the beginning, for the time and discomfort that travelling to place of work may involve. To bar such peo allowance will provide a total disincentiv because people would hardly be able to earn 12 or 15 hours a week than they would benefits alone.

What about some of the difficulties ar processing claims for the disability allowance compared to family credit. I am only too we many people are having great difficulty in obt credit. Will people have to provide wage slip for family credit, for at least five weeks bef claim?

Many people with disabilities may be experiment with working in case they entitlement to the long-term disability be thinking in particular of the severe disableme People are entitled to that allowance if they co before the age of 20. Are they also to be ba

The Bill specifies that previous benefit can for a maximum of two years, and the reassured us about that. That in itself is no m than the eight-week linking period which may be a disincentive to experiment with work. Pe problem to be tackled—and it is certainly n the Bill—is much more fundamental than the we are discussing: it is about improvin employment opportunities and about obtain Government a guarantee that the existing and training services will be maintained and i need a guarantee about the introducti discrimination legislation, and the quota sy be enforced. We also need a national minim

6 pm

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-Ea Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mrs. Heal) great experience, and to that extent her c welcome. However, she was a little ch recognising many of the changes that the have made to help disabled people on low in remove the barriers to work. She said tha nothing for pensioners but, of course, the measures to provide disability premium pension premiums for people on low incom have spoken about that. It is helpful to remo work, and if it can be done in a way that do net cost, extra money is available to be sp

I listened carefully to the speech of the ho Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher). I am gratef Gentleman for allowing me to intervene. H his promised answer about how much mon party would put on the table. He adopt method of jobbing forward and calculating

a reduction of £1·5 billion, even though the Government's track record is of increasing expenditure. He said that such a reduction was scandalous. When we job backwards, we see that in real terms the Government are spending £4 billion more than Labour did when it was in office.

The hon. Gentleman said that the Government are being "extremely mean", but we are spending twice as much as Labour did when it was in power, so how would he describe expenditure at half the current level? Instead of spuriously jobbing forward and trying to invent a reduction in spending when the Government's track record is of increasing spending, the hon. Gentleman should look at his own record, try to figure out exactly what he would spend and tell us the amount that a Labour Government would put on the table.

All we have to go on at the moment are the words of his hon. Friend the Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett). She said that Labour hoped to implement its policies as resources allowed. She has not specified any sum. The hon. Member for Oldham, West said that he would come to that in his speech, but he never did. I do not know whether he was afraid to come out with it, or whether he has not been able to do the sums. Perhaps his right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) has told him not to give any figures because the right hon. and learned Member would be embarrassed when he came to fund the policies. It is spurious nonsense to talk about the Government reducing future expenditure on the disabled when the whole pattern has been of increasing spending.

The Bill is an important step forward. Of course we all want to see more money spent on the disabled. It is probably the greatest unmet need in my constituency, where we have severely mentally handicapped adults with challenging behaviour living at home. We should welcome the Bill as another step on the road to more spending. As my hon. Friend the Member for Eastleigh (Sir D. Price) said, it is another wave on the ocean.

Given that we have a record of a continuous increase in spending, I do not understand how the hon. Member for Oldham, West can give such spurious projections and say that there will be a reduction of £1·5 billion. All hon. Members accepted that SERPS was the wrong way to allocate scarce resources. If we are to spend more, surely it is right to ask how we should spend the extra money.

Mr. Meacher *rose*——

Mr. Thurnham: Does the hon. Gentleman propose to tell us how much he would spend?

Mr. Meacher: The hon. Gentleman keeps repeating the same point. The £1·5 billion per year cut is based on Government figures which are to be provided in *Hansard* and which the hon. Gentleman can consult. When he looks back, as he is perfectly entitled to do, at the increased expenditure on the disabled, he will see that these are not new benefits introduced by the Government but further take-up of benefits that were introduced by the last Labour Government. We are committed to comprehensive disability income. I agree that the cost will be considerable, but we have clearly said that we will introduce it as soon as resources allow. We are responsible about that and intend to do it. The Government do not.

Mr. Thurnham: It is obvious that, under socialism, the money was not there. As Sir John Wilson said recently, "Communism has failed because it is incompetent and i surely important that the enterprise culture should not because it is inhumane. The provision society makes people with disability is surely one of the most sensitive poi in that issue. There must be some way of rewarding winn without victimising disabled losers."

The hon. Member for Oldham, West was not gener enough to recognise that the Government have introdu many new measures. It is not just a question of all the measures that a Labour Government tabled but could afford to implement. There is a thicket of new measu and the Bill lists some strange alphabetical clauses such 37ZA, 37ZB and 37ZC. If we had not had a change in week's business, I would have gone further into the before the debate, which was originally scheduled tomorrow. Perhaps I can leave it to later stages of the to find out more about it.

I turn now to employment issues. The recent sur showed that there are close on 1 million disabled peopl work, and that 250,000 are unemployed. I am sure that new allowance will help to create conditions in which unemployed can be brought back into work.

I was pleased by the Government's newly introdu logo for employers who adopt good practices. It ha double tick, and that is a double tick for the Governme policy on the disabled: that double tick means dou spending. I am pleased that employers will be able to ad that code, thereby showing that they are willing to emp disabled people to the maximum extent of a compa resources, even though the quota may not be applicabl an employer's particular industry.

I recently discussed several matters with members of Bolton and Wigan committee for the employment people with disabilities. I hope that the prospects of peo employed by agencies of the Department of Employm such as disablement resettlement officers and others, benefit from their work in this important area. T should in no way feel that their career will not develo that Department as well as it would in any o Department of the Civil Service.

People who get sheltered placement scheme opp tunities in the Civil Service should also be able to deve their careers. There should be a progression of people f day centres through sheltered workshops to shelte placement schemes and then into industry. That is be than staying in, for example, Remploy for years on People should be seconded to industry so that they move into employment as soon as possible. I am sure the new allowance will help to make that much easie

It is interesting to consider the position of over companies with factories in Britain and the extent to wh their employment practices here may develop u legislation in their home states. It would be worth seei study showing the extent to which employers, whose h office is subject to legislation in a foreign country, ado different practice here. However, I understand that the no evidence to suggest that German companies, in wh head offices there is supposed to be a 6 per cent. qu endeavour to employ 6 per cent. here.

That suggests an area in which we could develop m freely, and the Government's present policy based u voluntary methods is the best way forward. Other meth used abroad have met with mixed success, but one m expect foreign subsidiary companies in this country follow the same line. There is no evidence that they do I believe that the Government are pursuing the r policy.

[Mr. Thurnham]

I received a brief note from RADAR—the Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation—and I should like to comment on the issues it raised. My right hon. Friend was right to introduce the independent living fund, which has grown to a current value of £60 million. It has proved extremely useful and has helped some of my constituents with great unmet needs. There is some doubt about the future of that fund, however, and I should be grateful if my right hon. Friend could tell us what is intended.

RADAR also raised the problem of Motability when mobility awards are given for a short period. I have written to my right hon. Friend about a constituent who is facing that problem. The length of time for which the mobility allowance is awarded is insufficient to fund a car under the Motability scheme. The mobility allowance contains the equivalent of cliff edges, with which people are unable to cope. I hope that my right hon. Friend can say something about that problem.

We must also consider carefully the incentives for people with disabilities to register as disabled when seeking employment. For one reason or another, many people do not do so, as they feel that there is no incentive to register as such. The disability working allowance should address that problem. In addition, those people registered as disabled should benefit from transitional relief on the community charge.

Disregards are also important when attempting to encourage people back to work. The hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire should have paid some attention to disregards and the fact that they have been increased. If people are able to work for a short time only—the hon. Lady mentioned people who can work alone for less than 16 hours a week—disregards represent one of the easiest ways back into work.

RADAR has also questioned the capital rules for people who will benefit from a disabled working allowance. It believes that there should be no capital limit and that the proposed limit of £8,000 is too restrictive on those people who need additional funds to help them to meet the costs of their disability. If they have such capital, it is unreasonable that they should be ruled out from benefiting from the new allowance. People need that capital to meet the cost of their additional needs.

I am grateful for the opportunity to raise such important issues, and I look forward to the successful passage of the Bill.

6.12 pm

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): It is always a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham), who has a good track record on this subject. The experience that he brings to the House means that our debates on it are all the better.

I shall try to be a little more generous than the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) when deciding whether the Bill is good or bad. Some may say that that would not be too difficult, but I should qualify my generosity by saying that what I welcome most about the Bill is the approach behind it. The Secretary of State underlined that the purpose of the Bill is to try to open up opportunities for people with disabilities so that they can seek greater independence. That is extremely welcome.

In principle there should be no such t
person. Governments and political partie
time discussing the difficulties encounte
for people with disabilities. We often get
of assuming that there are problems a
people with disabilities, but many of th
great deal to contribute. Society's attitud
the way in which we provide for peopl
must be turned round. I hope that th
positive impact on that important matt

The way in which we take decisions
for people with disabilities should be e
Such decisions should be taken wit
decision-making process. I am he
contribution of access panels to the pu
the local provision that must be mad
disabilities. Long may that contributio

Although I welcome the general app
the costs involved have not been prope
a waste of time, however, to trade insul
about how much each party would spe
have no doubt that the Minister's inten
honest and that he does a great dea
interests of people with disabilities withi
government. However, whether the rig
succeeds with his Treasury colleague
certain. I do not believe that the Minist
a deal as the Secretary of State tried to
believe that £325 million, to be spent ov
up to an awfully big row of beans. I exo
from blame, however, as I know that, in
he knows that that sum is not enough.
are nods and winks in this game an
Gentleman said that he was prepared
Treasury and to pray in aid hon. Mem
resources are insufficient, I would supp
hope that the right hon. Gentleman will
is the first block in a building project t
to go before it is complete.

The survey undertaken by the Of
Censuses and Surveys was an excell
review the extent of the problem throu
I do not believe, however, that the
satisfied the expectations of the press
responsible for promoting the intere
disabilities. The work undertaken
produced have not been properly ass
account in the Bill.

The hon. Member for Bolton, North
how much money is necessary and
devoted by the various political parties
us, including the Government, should
the principle of moving towards
disability income. I do not care how
pressure groups are realistic about it a
that a Government of any political co
what they need immediately. It w
assistance to those groups, however, i
in principle, the long-term goal is
disability income, no matter how long
cost. That commitment would be a p
to our discussions. I hope that the
something about that when he replies

Additional costs for heating, lau
domestic care have largely been put to
The additional costs that will resu

privatisation of the water industry in England and Wales and the privatisation of the electricity industry will exacerbate the problem. The decision to set the lower rate of attendance mobility components at £10 only from next April will not begin to meet the problem.

The mobility allowance is too restrictive. I know that it would not be cheap, but, as I have argued before, it is wrong to use cost as a reason not to take on board the possibility of extending the allowance to those over the age of 65. That, more than anything else, causes heartache to those who attend my surgeries.

I see the Minister raising his eyes to the ceiling. I am well aware that we are talking about a large amount of money, but there is no justification in principle for the existing position. If we continue to allow such a position, we are in effect saying that disability is synonymous with being old, and that is neither true nor fair. The Government should address the problem, but they do not seem to have done so; even worse, they do not seem to be prepared to do so in future. Never mind the amount of money involved: if the Government could say something constructive about a new approach, I should be happier.

The Bill is unclear about those with severe learning disabilities or challenging behaviour. That is another problem that I find in my constituency: apparently such people might qualify for the lower but not the higher rate of mobility allowance. Perhaps that is a Committee point, but I hope that the Minister can clarify it at some stage.

The Secretary of State earlier referred to the extension of mobility allowance to deaf-blind people. That was warmly welcomed, but there remains the problem of take-up. Far too many people are turned down at the assessment stage. I make no complaint, as it is a difficult judgment to make, but I do not think that adjudication officers are being given the training that they need to cope with the needs of sensory disability. If the problem were addressed, deaf-blind people could probably obtain the benefit and allowance that they are not obtaining at present.

I was disappointed by the Government's decision to extend the qualifying period to three months. Perhaps the Minister could say a word about that. In my experience, medical people are usually definite about the extent of any given disability, and about whether it is chronic or temporary. The Minister may say that that administratively is easier said than done, but in my experience doctors are quite clear about whether a condition will continue.

I am on all fours with the philosophy of the disability working allowance. I believe that the threshold levels and the maximum benefit rates are too low, but I am prepared to give the Government the benefit of the doubt and wait and see what emerges in future public expenditure survey rounds and in Conservative conferences at various seaside resorts—where, no doubt, Ministers meet in the room of the Chief Secretary to the Treasury; more power to their elbow, say I.

The question of most importance to carers is whether eligibility for invalidity care allowance can be linked to both levels of the new disability living allowance, rather than just the higher level. That is causing real concern, and it would be welcome if the Government could say something about it.

The Bill as a whole deserves the support of the House. I intend to study the figures given by the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) about the cuts, some of which seem to be fairly sizeable. I shall read what he said in the *Official Report* very carefully. Certainly, in t costs the Government have little to crow about aspects of the Bill can be improved upon in Com and the debate will unquestionably continue—alth suspect that the public debate will concern what is the Bill rather than what is.

In so far as the Bill will help disabled people future, I support it, and I hope that the House will same.

6.24 pm

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): The Bill is forward, although it is a much smaller one than m us hoped. Much of the agenda was well brought ou hon. Member for Eastleigh (Sir D. Price) and excellent Select Committee report, to which I pay It is sad that the right hon. Member for Stoke-o South (Mr. Ashley) is not with us for this debate, a played a leading role in the work done for disabled he is indisposed at present, but I hope that he will shortly—in time for the Committee stage.

I think back to the Conservative manifesto which said that

"a coherent system of cash benefits"

would be introduced for disabled people

"as swiftly as the strength of the economy allows."

We have been told repeatedly by Ministers—not the Prime Minister—that the economy has go strength to strength; presumably, therefore, we now be looking for the fulfilment of that pledg that measuring rod 11 years on, however, I am whether the Bill is as substantial as many of us ho some extent, it merely tinkers with some proble does not deal with others at all.

We must see the Bill in the context of the dela community care legislation—which has been pu another two years—and the non-implementa several parts of the Disabled Persons (Consultation and Representation) Act 1986. Pa and III of that Act are relevant to some of the ma we are discussing here, and I have no doubt tha deal with that in Committee.

Before I get too critical, I should like to pay t the fact the Bill contains one provision for whi hon. Members from both sides of the House hav for a long time—the extension of mobility a components to those, especially mentally han people, who can physically walk, but are unable independently. There was a time when handicapped people were receiving benefit, unti court cases raised doubts about that. It is good t that has now been cleared up—although the Bill suggest that it may be provided at the lower rate that is the case, I suspect that it will be inadequate instances, and that we may need to return to the also regret the three-month waiting period. I thou in the context of attendance allowance, we wer away from that. The whole thrust last year was to away with waiting periods. Now we are introduci and that is unfortunate.

Perhaps the Minister can clarify the position the extension of mobility allowance to peo agoraphobia—people who, because they have pr going out, need assistance. MIND has lobb Members about that.

[Mr. Dafydd Wigley]

A number of hon. Members referred to the position with regard to mobility allowance beyond the age of 65. I have a number of difficult cases in that category in my constituency. If community care means anything, there must be adequate support for those beyond the age of 65. That is when so much disability occurs and so much help is needed. We should not be pulling out and failing to provide assistance where it is most needed. RADAR made a strong point about that in its representations to us. It said:

"RADAR totally rejects the restriction of the new levels of allowance to people who become disabled before age 65. The current rules for Mobility allowance are possibly the single issue on which RADAR receives the most complaints. We do not advocate the extension of Mobility allowance to pensioners as a priority, but a properly constructed disablement costs allowance payable to meet costs of disability rather than payable on the basis of age and cause of disability."

That is the level at which the argument should be put—there should not be an automatic cut-off at 65, but people should be judged in the context of their disabilities and needs.

In the past, I have had an opportunity to mention in the House my own family circumstances and our awareness of the costs of disability. I know the great benefit that comes from attendance and mobility allowance. We received two attendance allowances and two mobility allowances simultaneously. That was enough to provide one full-time person to cope with our disabled children when they were alive. Our circumstances were better than those of many people facing similar difficulties. I urge the Minister to look in some depth at the level of resources needed to help disabled people. Some 4·5 million disabled adults—two out of every three—live in households in which there are no earners. Those people are dependent solely on benefits. The proposed extension of mobility and attendance allowance to a wider group, albeit at reduced rates, addresses only two of the extra costs of disability—the attendance and mobility costs.

The Office of Population Censuses and Surveys study found that the most common item of additional expenditure on normal items was fuel for extra heating or hot water. More than half—51 per cent.—of those surveyed thought that they spent more on fuel than they would have done had there not been a disability in the household.

Mencap undertook a survey on the needs of children and adults with profound retardation and multiple handicap. It confirmed the need for additional financial support to cover heating costs. Some 79 per cent. of parents of children with such handicaps and 74 per cent. of the parents of adults with such handicaps needed more money for heating costs. Disabled families face additional costs for heating, diet, laundry, communication, clothing and domestic help, which all add to their bills. However, the legislation does not improve the living conditions of such people. Deaf people often face additional costs of aids and adaptations, and we should make more progress to help them.

As well as the revenue costs, many disabled people have to pay out for capital cost items, which can be expensive. There should be flexibility in the system to deal with their requirements. The Social Security Advisory Committee sent a report to the Secretary of State urging him to increase the rates of income support to take account of some of those costs. People now face additional costs such as the poll tax and water rates, which will certainly increase in future years.

It does not say much for the affluent Britain of the 1990s that disabled people are unable to afford the fuel to heat their houses or have hot water. They are not luxuries but basic necessities. The proposed disabled living allowance must make provision for those extra, basic living costs. Hon. Members have received representations from the Spinal Injuries Association underlining that need, and from Deaf Accord. Those organisations say that, for deaf and hard-of-hearing people, the introduction of an element in the allowance to look after such additional costs is essential. All the representations that we received underlined the need for us to make progress.

I fear that the disability working allowance may not be providing enough incentive for those wishing to return to work or go to work. It should be enough to ensure that there is extra income as a result of the allowance to cover the cost of travelling—which in a region such as mine can sometimes be large—eating away from home and working clothes. The allowance should contain elements of pension rights and certainly a margin of motivation to make the exercise worth while.

The hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mrs. Heal) mentioned the 16-hour minimum limit. Many disabled people may wish to start at a much lower level and build up the number of hours. Having a cut-off of 16 hours does not help us to get the maximum out of the allowance.

We in this country have waited 11 years for progress to be made on disability allowances. There is a contrast between our priorities and those shown by some small European countries. In the Netherlands there is a non means-tested benefit that is adequate to live on, payable to all those who have never been able to work or who become unable to do so during full-time education up to the age of 30. In Denmark, the contributory system has been entirely abolished and there is no discrimination between any group of disabled people. For any single person totally incapable of work, the benefit rate in Denmark on 1 January last year was the equivalent of £106 a week purchasing power. If we compare that to the rate of invalidity benefit, let alone the SDA, we see that the United Kingdom is way behind. There is tremendous room for us to improve. If small countries such as Denmark, Holland and Sweden can do so much more for disabled people and meet their real needs, we should do so here. It is a matter of priority and values.

I do not challenge the wishes of the Ministers present today to make progress, but I only wish that the message would get home to Treasury Ministers so that we have the right priorities on expenditure in these islands.

6.36 pm

Mr. John Hannam (Exeter): I apologise to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for my absence at the beginning of the debate. I was attending and speaking at a meeting upstairs on compensation for haemophiliacs, which I am sure the House will agree is an equal priority.

Like the hon. Members for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) and for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood), and as secretary of the all-party disablement group, I welcome the opportunity afforded by the Bill to improve the benefits system for disabled people. I particularly welcome

the fact that the Government have used the opportunity to change the assessment procedures for the attendance and mobility allowance, away from the much-criticised medical system towards self-assessment. I welcome the attempt to devise a system to give assistance to people partially capable of work. However, the disability allowance needs much more work, consultation and change, which should be coupled with legislative protection for disabled people in employment, if it is to provide the incentive to work that we all wish.

Last October, a 10-point plan of improvements was announced, which was welcomed. I particularly welcomed the extension of mobility allowance to deaf and blind people, about which the all-party disablement group, hon. Members present and I have been concerned for many years. It took about eight years to get the message through.

The Government have published a consultation document containing their illustrative levels of benefit for the disability working allowance. I regret that that was not published in advance of the Bill to enable disabled groups to assess how the benefit would work. I hope that the Secretary of State will give a guarantee that work on that benefit will proceed in full consultation with the relevant disability groups, so that we can come up with a workable system for disabled people at the end of the Bill's passage. If the working allowance is to be of real benefit to disabled people, we must take their circumstances into account.

The two benefits—family credit and disablement working allowance—have fundamentally different aims. Family credit assists families on low incomes, and the disability working allowance should be of benefit to enable disabled people who are unable to work full time because of their disability to work part time. It is vital to ensure that we do not lose this opportunity to make a workable benefit system for partially capacitated people. My right hon. Friend will know of my long campaign for that objective.

I can identify a number of issues on which we should work during the Bill's process. First, as other speakers have mentioned, the current limit on the capital disregard of £8,000 simply replicates family credit, and should be much higher. Disabled people need substantially more capital than able-bodied people because many items of essential equipment—such as powered wheelchairs and communication equipment—are not available on the NHS.

As advancing technology produces improvements, there is also a dramatic increase in the price of equipment. The cost of such equipment uses up capital that many able-bodied people have to spare for other luxuries of life. Disability often precludes many do-it-yourself jobs that able-bodied people can carry out, which means that disabled people have to pay someone else to do them. Capital often has to be consumed to pay for assistance while a spouse is on holiday.

I urge the Secretary of State to use the example of the independent living fund, where any capital earmarked for expenditure occasioned by disability can be disregarded. Disabled people often receive lump sum payments because of their disability—for example, industrial injury, or compensation for personal injury or redundancy. For many of those people, the opportunity to rehabilitate through part-time work should not be denied them because of restrictive capital limits.

My next query concerns recipients. The allowance should not be limited to people in receipt of certain passporting benefits. It should, for example, be available to deaf people and partially sighted people who are not in receipt of any disability benefit. A functional test of capacity will exist for some claimants when they renew their claim after six months. That could easily apply to new claimants who are not in receipt of any passporting benefits.

On threshold levels, the illustrative figures given by the Department for the working allowance will not provide an adequate incentive for disabled people to work. I quote a true example which came through on the very day on which benefit levels for the working allowance were announced.

Sarah is 32 and lives at home with her parents. She has not worked since 1983 because she has multiple sclerosis. She has a science degree and has worked in industry, and her current benefit income is £58·70 in invalidity benefit and community charge benefit. If she goes to work and earns £34·60 a week, she will get £37·20 in disability working allowance—a net gain of £13·10. However, out of that she will have to meet work-related expenses—fares, working clothes and eating away from home. She lives at home now, but if she were to live in rented accommodation she would pay at least £20 a week in rent and would finish up gaining only 7p in housing benefit—so she would actually lose benefit.

We must examine the thresholds carefully and consider higher ones. We need not grumble about them too much at this stage; I always regard the establishment of new benefits as the beginning of a process. We should be able to consider the thresholds in Committee, and I hope that we can raise them to proper levels over the years ahead. On the hours rule, I welcome the fact that the requirement to work a minimum of 24 hours has been abolished in favour of 16 hours. We have long argued that 24 hours excludes and would exclude many people who are partially capable of work, but I still believe that we need to revise the rule further. What will be the position of someone who has had an accident and who needs to build up his hours gradually until he can work 16 hours or even more? Such an example needs to be accommodated in the system. Nicole Davoud, who has campaigned so much on behalf of multiple sclerosis sufferers, has written to me today—other hon. Members may have had the same letter—confirming that the rule needs revision.

As for the disability living allowance, as one who has campaigned for a number of years on behalf of the deaf-blind, I welcome the new system. Proposals to drop the humiliating and much criticised assessment procedure for the combined mobility and attendance allowance have been welcomed by all the organisations working in this area.

However, it is misleading and confusing for the claimants to call this a disability living allowance, because it is not a new allowance; it is a combination of two existing benefits, plus a new lower rate of attendance and of mobility allowance. There is no doubt that the extra money each week will be welcomed by disabled people who now receive nothing, but it is misleading to imply that a completely new benefit is being introduced. I regret that we have not yet been able to take the step towards a comprehensive disability income scheme that has been advocated for so many years. As my hon. Friend the Member for Eastleigh (Sir D. Price) pointed out, the Select Committee produced an excellent report which made a number of useful recommendations in this direction.

[Mr. John Hannam]

My long-term objectives include the hope that this is the first stage of a process and that the Government aim in the long term to introduce a disablement costs allowance. As pressure mounts on my right hon. Friend every time we have these debates, and as the budget grows ever larger, we are approaching the point at which we can effect the changeover. I should like to press this matter and ask again about the long-term plans of the Government to upgrade the severe disablement allowance to the level of invalidity benefit. Initial steps were made in that direction in the previous Social Security Bill, which introduced age-related additions to the severe disablement allowance. What are the long-term plans to meet the high costs of severely disabled people and of elderly disabled people? These are pertinent questions about our continuing policies, and we should discuss them in the context of this good Bill.

I hope that my comments on this progressive Bill have been constructive. I hope too that it can be improved in Committee and thereafter. I congratulate the Government on the advances that they have introduced for disabled people, and I look forward to many more years of improvements, under successive Conservative Governments.

6.45 pm

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse (Pontefract and Castleford): I, too, apologise for missing the Secretary of State's speech —I was engaged on business similar to that described by the hon. Member for Exeter (Mr. Hannam). Other hon. Members have covered many of the issues, so I shall concentrate on the cut-off at 65.

My hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mrs. Heal) and other hon. Members have pointed out that there are many categories of disability among people aged over 65. The House will be well aware that I have campaigned for many years on the problems of the severe chest diseases suffered by mineworkers. Five times, I have presented Bills to highlight the problem, and arising out of those Bills, the Industrial Injuries Advisory Council held an investigation which reported about two years ago—but it still did not find it possible to recommend to the Secretary of State that emphysema be described as an industrial disease. That was alarming and regrettable, given the large amount of in-depth medical research and evidence which shows that mineworkers are 10 times more likely to contract the disease than members of the general public.

I recognise that the council's failure to prescribe emphysema as an industrial disease has nothing to do with this Bill. The problem is that the disease tends to progress more rapidly in men over 65. It is a severe disability. Miners reach the stage when they cannot walk more than a yard and find it difficult to lift a cup of tea to their lips. They cannot look after themselves. Most of them live in bungalows or in local authority dwellings that burn solid fuel because they have always enjoyed concessionary fuel.

With each passing year, the miners' wives, who are as much victims of the disease as the miners, become a year older and thus less able to cope. They can no longer carry their husbands to the toilet. They can no longer dress them. However, if these people apply to live in dwellings in which they do not need to carry buckets of coal to mend their fires and warm themselves, British Coal immediately stops their concessionary fuel allowance, because they have converted to gas or some other form of heating. So these unfortunate miners miss out in every way and do not get their rightful compensation. If the disease does not become severe until after they are 65, as often happens, they are cut off and left with this chronic disease. Their plight is distressing indeed. They cannot live without oxygen masks, applied continuously. If that does not happen, they are not classified as disabled.

I appreciate how much more it would cost if those over 65 were included—there is no bottomless pit. However, the medical profession knows that eventually these men will die. That is known before they reach the age of 65. However, they do not qualify for benefit, because their disablement is not so severe when they are below that age.

I ask the Minister to take account of these men. The medical profession ought to be able to take action before they reach the age of 65. The care allowance ought also to take into account the fact that the wives of these men hardly ever think about applying for assistance. They deem it to be their duty to look after their husbands. To have this cut-off at 65 means that many categories of disabled people, not least those to whom I have referred, are treated unfairly.

6.51 pm

Mr. Clifford Forsythe (Antrim, South): I give a general welcome to the Bill. It should be an improvement on the present position of certain disabled applicants. Any improvement, however small, must be supported so that we can continue to encourage Her Majesty's Government to target benefits properly on those who are most in need.

Surely the starting point for dealing with the problems experienced by the disabled should be to make sure that they are on a par with their able-bodied neighbours in the community. To do that, we must look at the extra cost incurred when a person is disabled. In other words, if an equal amount of benefit were given to two claimants—one disabled and the other able-bodied—by the very nature of things the disabled person is at a distinct disadvantage because of the extra costs incurred as a result of disability.

Every representative body speaking on behalf of the disabled has given a list of the extra costs that the Bill does not seem to take into account. Many disabled children and adults require additional help with higher heating, diet, laundry and clothing costs. They also incur costs involving communications and domestic help. At least in Northern Ireland we do not as yet have the problem of the poll tax and the higher water charges predicted for Great Britain, but all the other additional costs that I have mentioned apply equally throughout the kingdom.

It is doubtful whether the £10 per week lower attendance component will meet the needs of claimants needing help getting out of bed in the morning or retiring for the night, or preparing even one cooked meal each day. While I welcome the extension of the mobility allowance to those who can walk but are not independently mobile, it is unlikely that for £10 they could obtain the services of a car and driver, let alone someone to be with them when they go out. I have not forgotten the independent living survey, which meets some of the higher costs arising from disability, but the future of the fund seems uncertain and the Bill provides no long-term assistance for such people.

I give a warm welcome to the provision which allows a disabled person to try out a job for up to two years before losing the right to return to the full benefit level that he or she received before commencing work. I hope that there will be no attempt by employers to pay low wages to disabled people because such people will be eligible for the disabled working allowance. It is not unknown for some employers to make disabled persons feel that it is a great favour for them to be allowed to work in their firms and that, by implication, they should expect lower wages. What a great insult that is to the many disabled people who are an example to other workers in dedication, hard work, common sense and excellent time keeping.

I am concerned about the means-tested nature of the disability working allowance for disabled people who are anxious to work. The DWA must create the right circumstances to provide sufficient extra finance to cover travelling to work, working clothes, meals at work, savings, building up a pension and, I hope, an increased income when all those things have been looked after. When work-related expenses are taken into account, the disabled person must believe that it is an advantage, not a disadvantage, to take up employment.

I ask the Minister to reconsider the £8,000 capital limit. If we wish to encourage the disabled to save, it is a mistake to impose a capital limit of £8,000. It would surely be fairer to increase that figure, or even to disregard all capital. Situations can arise, through accidents or terrorist action, which make citizens, through no fault of their own, disabled for life. Sadly, we have many such cases in Northern Ireland. Let us not add insult to injury for those unfortunate people. Let us show our compassion by disregarding sums of money awarded to them which, if the truth were known, they would gladly give away if they could only return to their former way of life.

It is disappointing that the Bill will not apply equally to all citizens, regardless of age. Surely those over 65 ought to be treated in the same way as all other citizens. I ask the Minister to ensure that local offices are fully aware during the implementation of the measure that the disablement working allowance cannot be applied for until a person has a job. At that point, disablement benefit ceases. While the claim is being processed, therefore, no benefit is payable. I urge the Minister to ensure that all local offices process such claims as speedily as possible.

I have mentioned the various improvements that we should like to be made to the Bill. I hope that in Committee the Minister will be persuaded to consider constructive suggestions which I know would improve the lot of many disabled people.

6.57 pm

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): My speech will be brief because I hope that the contents of the Bill will be fully explored in Committee. The fact that we do not intend to divide the House suggests that we believe that the Bill contains some good things. However, it does not go far enough. The Minister could reply that that is always our argument, but if we did not put forward that argument continually no improvement would be made to social security and welfare benefits.

The point has already been made that the £10 allowance is inadequate. If hon. Members think about the things on which they spend £10, they will realise how insignificant a sum it is in terms of additional social security benefits. I do not believe that the allowance will be successful in encouraging people to return to work. Nevertheless, it is a step in the right direction. One only has to think of mobility costs. It costs £2 per day in bus fares to travel into town from where I live. If disabled people are able to travel to work, most will do so by bus. They will need help to get to town, but many will try to do so if they believe that they can succeed.

The Bill places more pressure on DSS staff. I have received nothing but help and co-operation from the office with which I have dealt since becoming a Member of Parliament and I am conscious of the pressures under which it works. During the recess, I took the opportunity of visiting the office. I informed the manager of my visit, not as a Member of Parliament but as a member of the public, with some of my constituents, to see what happens. I was appalled at the indignity that claimants suffer and the long waiting time. I was even more appalled at the pressures on the people behind the counter. If our constituents who, through no fault of their own, depend on benefits are to be dealt with in a proper and dignified manner, the system should enable the people behind the counter to provide such a service.

We shall explore the Bill further in Committee. It is a step in the right direction, but certain parts of it need amending and some benefits need increasing. I hope that when it emerges from Committee it will be a better Bill.

7.1 pm

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): The hon. Member for Eastleigh (Sir D. Price) ended his speech on a poetic note, referring to a wave coming in on the top of a tide. That metaphor is perhaps more helpful to Labour Members, as the present tide has defied the laws of nature and taken eleven and a half years to come in, whereas normally tides come in twice a day. Tides often have another unfortunate effect—they not only come in but go out, leaving a mudscape that is unsightly and ugly.

We must consider what is behind the Bill. One hates to be accused of being churlish, but much of it is cosmetic and its main effect is to recycle money. The hon. Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham), like many other hon. Members who have participated in the debate, has made a distinguished contribution and has a deep commitment to the needs of disabled people. Unfortunately, as he confessed, he was in some difficulty because he was expecting to speak tomorrow and had to rely on a handout from the Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation for most of his speech. He unfairly attacked my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) for referring to the finances of the Bill, which are absolutely crucial. Our 6·5 million disabled people have been waiting a long time for a Bill that is radical, progressive and fundamental. Those people, who have been short-changed by life or cheated by nature, have a right to expect something far better than the Bill. Without question, there are improvements in the Bill. Hon. Members have complained about how disabled benefits have worked, but some of the Bill's provisions will be effective.

There are two parts to any Bill—first, the philosophy of whether it will work and whether it is the right thing to do and, secondly, how it underpins measures and the generosity behind it. We hear daily from Conservative Members about the improving prosperity of our society,

[Mr. Paul Flynn]

but what share of that is going to disabled people? The Bill paints a different picture. It is a means of recycling money. All disabled people have a complex income structure from multiple sources, but the Bill attempts to rob Peter to pay Peter.

"The Way Ahead" was part of the Government's much trumpeted process of targeting. The Government are brilliant at targeting income tax handouts on the best off, but the improvements in benefits for disabled people will be financed from existing benefits. That must be understood. Projecting forward is the only sensible way of gauging their benefits. These are wedge-shaped cuts. The point of the wedge is felt immediately and, although it may be thin and slight, it expands over the years and an enormous amount of money is involved.

If we are to make a sensible judgment, we must consider the other changes that the Government have made, often to little known benefits of which people are unaware. A Bill of this kind is heralded with much publicity and adjectival assault from the Government, but what effect have their other little cuts had? The disability working allowance is expected to be self-financing. The total cost of the allowance will be covered by the loss of other benefits paid to disabled people. From the Government's point of view, it is even better than that because the Government will profit from the additional £10 million income tax that recipients are expected to pay.

The disability living allowance will involve an estimated additional cost of £120 million in 1992-93—not a huge sum of public expenditure—rising to £240 million by 1993-94. After the first few years, that additional cost will be more than outweighed by the savings resulting from the other proposals in "The Way Ahead".

The biggest cut, which was made in the Social Security Act 1990, is the abolition of the earnings-related element of invalidity benefit. That is a bit of a mouthful and is little understood, but it is a vital lifeline to many disabled people. The earnings-related element was introduced by the Labour Government's Social Security Pensions Act 1975, which had all-party support but was savagely cut by the Social Security Act 1986, the effects of which were expected to save about £400 million per year by 2013 and £1 billion by 2003—far more than the amount needed to cover the entire cost of this Bill. According to Government figures in parliamentary answers, the abolition of what remained of the earnings-related invalidity benefit is expected to save a further £1·3 billion net by 2025-26.

The second major cut made by the Social Security Act 1990 as part of "The Way Ahead" package was the abolition of reduced earnings allowance for the victims of industrial injuries and diseases. Again, this was the culmination of a series of salami cuts in that benefit over the years. The abolition of what remained is expected to cut a further £130 million by 2001-02.

Much play was made of the changes in the disregard to help disabled people back to work. The Bill may have that effect, but another Bill which is to be brought before us next week cuts statutory sick pay and shifts the burden to employers. That must be a disincentive for employers to employ disabled people and will have a further balancing effect on any benefit from the changes in disregard.

The Government are entitled to argue, as I am sure that they will, that the money has to come from somewhere, but there are far better ways of obtaining it. The lady who w Prime Minister at 3.30 pm—so far as I know, she is s Prime Minister; I would not want my remark to cau alarm among Conservative Members—explained how t Government would make changes in terms of the waste money on armaments in past 40 years. Despite the G crisis and other dangers in the world, the peace divide will result in major savings. Surely, therefore, the wo possible way to raise money to improve conditions f people with disabilities is the way that has been used by t Government, whereby benefits to which those people w already entitled have been taken away. That is li providing a starving child with a meal by taking away shirt, or mending the walls of a house by taking ston from its foundations. The disability groups and the bod which represent them will judge the Bill and t Government's record as unhelpful and ungenerous.

7.10 pm

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): T Government's case in promoting the Bill, even before appeared, has been an inverted pyramid of ministe claims that rest on but a pinhead of fact. The pyramid w tottering to destruction long before today, as Ministe claims for their proposals were scrutinised and rejected all the major organisations of and for disabled people. the words of the briefing for this debate from the House Commons Library, their reaction is one of "extreme anp and disappointment".

The Secretary of State in his speech talked about t "cliff edge". In doing so, he reminded me that Peter La of the Disablement Income Group—than whom no one the voluntary sector is more widely respected in this Hou —described "The Way Ahead", the policy paper on whi the Bill is founded, as

"nothing but a narrowing stony ledge".

As for the Government's claims about bringing so coherence into cash provision for disabled people, comments,

"the future promises to be a worrying mess";

and he concludes that ministerial

". . . talk about a more coherent system is a sign of deliriu

My hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West (M Meacher), in opening the debate from this side of House, comprehensively demolished the Secretary State's case for regarding the Bill, in any meaningful sen as a bright new way ahead for Britain's 6·5 million peo with disabilities. What they and their organisations se and the Bill fails to provide, is urgent relief from the hug increased gap in living standards that divides people w disabilities from those of most other people in Brit today. Average male earnings have increased by 20 p cent. while the present Government have been in pow yet the basic level of benefits for disabled people has ri by less than 1 per cent. Ministers can juggle the figures much as they like, but that is the unvarnished truth ab the priorities of this Government as they affect people w disabilities and others more fortunate.

Let us consider the pinhead of fact in the Governmen inverted pyramid. It is incontrovertibly true that, tak together, the Government's proposals as set out in policy paper which they published in January will, as th claim, increase expenditure in the short term, but even t claim is subject to major qualification. The qualificatio not mine or that of the organisations of and for disab people, but one made by Ministers themselves in reply

parliamentary questions since "The Way Ahead"—heralded as a policy to take us into the next century—was published in January. What their replies to my questions and those of other right hon. and hon. Members show is that, in 10 years, the net increase in spending will be only £6 million. I leave it to any senior wranglers in the House to decide what percentage contribution that will make to narrowing the huge gap in living standards between disabled people and those in our society whose needs are much less compelling.

Yet the claims made for the Government's proposals are still uncritically accepted even by news editors of high standing. After all the dust thrown in their eyes by Whitehall's news managers, how many news editors are aware of the Government's own admission that virtually all "extra" spending on social security benefits for disabled people has been the result of more people becoming entitled to benefits, not least the attendance and mobility allowances, that were introduced before they came to power? Again, how many recipients of the "facts" churned out by the Government's news managers are aware that there were 1 million disabled losers from the so-called "reform" of social security that took effect in April 1988?

Many thousands, even of the most severely disabled people, have had no increase in their incomes since that date, notwithstanding the effect of inflation over the past two and a half years. They are people who were receiving help for their additional requirements under the supplementary benefit scheme which terminated with the change to income support. The help that they have lost was for extra heating, the high laundry costs that increasing incontinence can cause, special diets and paid assistance to enable them to go on living in their own homes. I have drawn repeated attention in the past two years to the idiotic myopia in Richmond house where the Department of Health provides expensive drugs for people with AIDS, while the Department of Social Security cruelly undermines them by failing to give them enough money to afford recommended diets.

The living standards of people with disabilities have also been further reduced by the poll tax. A recent survey carried out by the Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation showed that nearly a quarter of the disabled respondents were over £400 a year worse off, while over half were over £300 a year worse off. Many of them are using the attendance and mobility allowances to meet the poll tax.

We have had some very well-informed speeches about the Government's record and proposals in this debate, notably from my hon. Friends the Members for Mid-Staffordshire (Mrs. Heal), for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse), for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. McKay) and for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn). We had important speeches as well from the hon. Members for Eastleigh (Sir D. Price), for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) and for Exeter (Mr. Hannam). Sadly, my right hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) has not been able to intervene in this debate, but he will soon be back—I hope tomorrow—ready as always to argue the claims of disabled people.

What emerges from the debate is that to bundle together the attendance and mobility allowances, in spite of the alterations that the Government propose, and to call the combination a new benefit is to mix truth with propaganda. The Government want to give the impression that they have now tackled the extra costs of disability. Their so-called disability living allowance does no such thing. It is an extension of existing allowances and the new components, set at £10 in each case, have been dismissed as "derisory" by the organisations that speak for disabled people. Even whatever meagre help with their attendance and mobility needs can be bought with £10 will be denied to the vast majority of disabled people by the age bar.

The Government argue that more pensioners are benefiting through occupational pension schemes and have higher incomes with which to meet their needs. The Social Services Committee, of which the hon. Member for Eastleigh is a distinguished member, looked at the evidence and in paragraph 29 of House of Commons Paper 646 concluded:

> "The Government should not assume that disabled people over pension age have necessarily enjoyed the same income rises as other pensioners."

Indeed, common sense tells us that it is younger pensioners who have the higher incomes and older pensioners who are most disabled. Just because some people have better incomes does not remove the Government's responsibility to direct help at those most in need.

If the disability living allowance lived up to its name, all would be well. It would recognise the other costs of disability, including special diets, extra heating, the need to employ domestic assistance and help with communication, of which disability organisations are constantly providing evidence but which the Government continually fail to recognise. The OPCS reports themselves reveal that, although only 18 per cent. of adults reported extra expenditure on food—OPCS 2, table 4.7—this was, at £6·20 per week, by far the single most expensive item; and expenditure was almost identical in all severity categories —OPCS 2, table 4.9. Equally, the small number of children with digestive disorders cost their parents four times as much as others—OPCS 5, table 4.16. What does the Bill do for them?

Nor does the so-called disability living allowance help disabled people with exceptionally high costs. The experience of the independent living fund has shown that there are several thousand people who need a lot of money to live independently in the community. Average payments made by the fund are £64 a week, but some payments exceed £400. The type of help now provided on a discretionary basis by the ILF should be a statutory right of disabled people.

One aspect of the allowance causes me particular concern. The House will know that I was instrumental in setting up the Motability scheme. The Bill states that, where a claimant is awarded both a mobility and an attendance component, they should be awarded for the same period. If this means that someone who would normally be awarded mobility allowance for three years or more would have the length of allowance reduced, they would no longer be able to use the Motability scheme. Will the Minister be commenting on the concern that this is causing among disabled people?

Even the most charitable person must describe the DLA as seriously flawed. It is difficult to find anything as complimentary to say about its siamese twin, the disability working allowance. This DWA bears no relation to the partial incapacity benefit for which disability organisations have campaigned for over 20 years. It bears no relation either to any of the schemes that have been operated successfully by several of our European partners —if the Prime Minister will allow the phrase—for many

[Mr. Alfred Morris]

years now. The DWA is little more than family credit without the families and incorporates all the poverty and unemployment traps of that misbegotten benefit.

As the Government readily concede, the DWA is, in their colourful language, "cost-neutral". That means, of course, that it will involve no extra spending by the Government. In practice, there will be no help, and thus no incentive to leave invalidity benefits for people with capital of over £8,000—even if it comes from a compensation award—or for those whose partners are working. DWA would begin to qualify for the name of a partial incapacity benefit only if the sole income taken into account were that from the claimant's own earnings. The list of access benefits is also likely to exclude entirely many deaf or partially sighted people. Again, the need to work 16 hours will exclude many people who, as my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire said, wish to build up their hours slowly, for example, after a serious accident.

Even people who do qualify will receive precious little incentive. RADAR has provided examples of how people currently claiming invalidity benefit would gain from the allowance. A single person who takes a job with net earnings of £50 a week will gain a little under £16, after taking loss in community charge benefit and housing benefit into account. A married person with earnings of £100 will gain under £20 a week. Once the costs of getting to work and other expenses are taken into account, there will be little left to provide disabled people with any improvements in their lifestyles. Moreover, both RADAR and Nicole Davoud, who, as the Minister knows, has worked long and hard over many years for a partial incapacity benefit, have pointed out that the absurdly steep taper will cause marginal tax rates of over 94 per cent. after loss of housing and community charge benefit. How can the Minister possibly defend that kind of mockery in the treatment of disabled people?

It is not in the Bill, but I understand that the additional partial incapacity test proposed by the Treasury for renewal claims refers not to earnings loss due to disability but to difficulty in finding a job. This is an incredible commentary on the abject failure of the Government's employment policies. Research and the experience of countless thousands of people with disabilities have shown that difficulty in finding work is predominantly caused by discrimination. If we cannot have a partial incapacity benefit, would it not, as the Disability Alliance has suggested, be more effective to introduce anti-discrimination legislation plus an extended linking rule for everyone?

The Prime Minister no doubt considers this to be an even more dangerous socialist policy than those espoused by the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine). Yet she has been hob-nobbing for the past few days with George Bush, that other notorious leftist, who signed into law this summer the Americans with Disabilities Act. That very important Act extends the hugely successful anti-discrimination legislation that the hotbed of socialism that is the United States has operated successfully over 15 years.

I recall the time, 15 years ago, when the Labour Government introduced their legislation for mobility allowance, invalid care allowance and non-contributory invalidity pension. Of course, we were criticised for not going far enough, but we were setting the framev which we would build. One of my most earnest ho to smash the contributory principle and end the unjust exclusion from benefits, as of right, of those to pay insurance contributions. It was an im breakthrough even to start down that road, just a the world on access to the built environment for people.

Today, we lag behind other countries. Where n have been now if, in the past 11 years, there had Government who, instead of reallocating resourc the poor to the very rich, had fulfilled their respon to those most in need? Fortunately, the chances Government now enduring to write the regulation the Bill are not good. In truth, as they kno extensive research and consultation since Janua resulted only in a change of names for longs benefits, to the bitter disappointment of everyon voluntary sector who knows the facts.

We have all, on both sides of the House, as the must know, been flooded with angry representatio the Bill. So I give notice this evening that we everything we can, from this side of the House, to the Bill in Committee. By common consent out Government, there is much to improve.

In his resignation speech last week, the forme Prime Minister, the right hon. and learned Men Surrey, East (Sir G. Howe), said that, in the mou present Prime Minister, words have lost their n This Bill does not provide for a disability living al properly so-called. In the words of the Disability "the Disability Living Allowance is clearly nothin kind. Why its name was changed from the original D Allowance is quite inexplicable. Both names are co misleading. The new name of Disability Living Allo anything compounds the confusion."

Nor does the Bill provide, in any real sense, for a d working allowance worthy of the name. We shal level best in Committee to improve the Bill in the which Britain's 6·5 million disabled people overwh ly now want this House urgently to proceed.

7.29 pm

The Minister for Social Security and Disable (Mr. Nicholas Scott): My hon. Friend the Men Eastleigh (Sir D. Price) ended his speech with well-known words and drew attention to the i ments that have been possible in the quality o disabled people over recent years. Having bo present responsibilities for three and a half years, passionately that the 1990s are likely to s substantial advances in the quality of l opportunities for disabled people in several differe

Demographic pressures will compel employers beyond the disabilities that confront them to the of so many disabled people. Improved access to offices, workshops and leisure facilities will also dramatically. We shall also have improved a coherent delivery of services for the disab technology will enable many more of them independently and earn their own livings.

The Government are determined to press on that and to encourage it to the greatest possible that we can achieve that improvement in the next There is also a role to be played in an improv generous and more coherent structure of ben

disabled people. Contrary to the moaning minnies on the Opposition Benches, I believe that the Bill is an important step in that direction.

I recognise that the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) has a duty to oppose our legislation because that is the role of the Opposition under our constitution, but he was far less generous than I expected when he considered the Bill's provisions. His criticism of us for marketing the two new measures was blatantly absurd. He takes great pleasure in saying that most of the increase in expenditure on disabled people under this Government has come about as a result of increased take-up. We market the benefits and make people aware of them because we want people to take them up. We have also made many of those benefits more generous and flexible while we have been in office. I fully recognise that we need to market the new benefits effectively so that people take them up and benefit from them.

The hon. Member for Oldham, West also said that the disabled living allowance was not simple or easy to understand. However, he apparently plans to return to a system with the complexities of additional requirements or to a points-based comprehensive disability allowance which would be immensely complex to operate and enormously dependent on medical assessments, which we are seeking to move away from. That would not begin to meet the needs of disabled people. I shall refer later to the improvements in assessment and adjudication that we have in mind, but the hon. Member for Oldham, West has it the wrong way round.

What is the philosophical approach of the hon. Member for Oldham, West to the disability working allowance? Does he want to encourage disabled people who can and wish to work to do so? We aim to do that, but the hon. Gentleman seemed to imply that we were trying to force people off invalidity benefit on to DWA. That is not true. We want disabled people to have the opportunity to achieve the dignity, independence and self-respect which comes from being able to earn one's own living.

The change in the linking rule is as important as the introduction of the allowance. I can take the hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mrs. Heal) with me when I say that if someone gets a job and then finds that he cannot hold it down or the employer feels that that person is not up to it, the person can retain the underlying entitlement to invalidity benefit or to severe disablement allowance. That will be an important encouragement.

The hon. Member for Oldham, West also criticised our general approach to disability and, I suppose, our generosity. I have referred to the figures before and I do not apologise for repeating them now. The last Labour Government managed, commendably, to increase expenditure for the long-term sick and disabled by £220 million per year during their period in office. We have improved that expenditure by £370 million per year during our period in office. That demonstrates our commitment to meeting the needs of the disabled.

The hon. Member for Oldham, West also used a slightly complicated phrase about unbundling which I think that I eventually grasped. The hon. Gentleman was correct to say that beneficiaries will need to know what they are receiving. The new arrangements, which bring together procedures for the care and mobility components in the new benefit, will bring to the beneficiary a single award notice which will make it clear exactly what the person is obtaining when the award is made. There is no great problem about that.

The hon. Gentleman was concerned that blind and partially sighted people would not get the new allowance. Many blind and partially sighted people will be getting invalidity benefit or severe disablement allowance before they start work, and registered blind people can receive the disability premium in income support, housing benefit or community charge benefit. Both those groups would satisfy the qualifying benefit test for the disability working allowance.

My hon. Friend the Member for Eastleigh referred to the momentum of progress, reinforcing Clough's words. I compliment the Select Committee on Social Services and my hon. Friend the Member for Eastleigh on the work that they have done in relation to disability. We consider their advice most carefully. My hon. Friend the Member for Eastleigh mentioned his aim and that of the Select Committee to bring the severe disablement allowance up to the level of invalidity benefit. Legislation would not be necessary to achieve that. I have no objection in principle to that, but it is a matter of resources and priorities and I cannot see an early prospect of achieving it. Nevertheless, I have noted carefully what my hon. Friend said.

My hon. Friend the Member for Eastleigh also asked us to extend the scope of invalid care allowance. I am sure that the whole question of carers will have to be addressed more carefully in future than in the past. The growing awareness of disability and care for the elderly and the role that carers play in our society is recognised in our introduction of the carer's premium in income support, through our improving disregards for carers and extending the premium for eight weeks after bereavement. Those may be small steps, but they are steps in the right direction to a wider recognition of the role that carers play.

Sir David Price: In his response to the fifth report of the Select Committee on Social Services, will my right hon. Friend bundle his views about the Government's intentions in a Green Paper? As members of the Select Committee on Social Services technically no longer exist, I am sure that our ghosts would lie happy if we felt that a full response was to come in the form of a Green Paper outlining the Government's future intentions.

Mr. Scott: I will ponder that suggestion and discuss it with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

My hon. Friend the Member for Eastleigh also tried to persuade us to link the assessment for disability benefits to the assessment for community care. The new system will make use of any existing evidence about a disabled person's condition. We want to make the process more coherent and interrelated.

The hon. Members for Mid-Staffordshire, for Oldham, West and for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) and my hon. Friend the Member for Exeter (Mr. Hannam) referred to a comprehensive disability benefit of one kind or another. Obviously cost is involved. One of the schemes put forward before we published "The Way Ahead" could not have been introduced for less than £3 billion per year. I must reinforce the point that I made to the hon. Member for Oldham, West. Such a benefit would inevitably be complex and it would inevitably depend heavily on medical manpower. In moving to a new system, there

[Mr. Scott]

would be many losers. There would have to be a considerable period of transitional protection. The hon. Member for Oldham, West is aware of the complexities.

Mr. Kirkwood: Why should there be substantially more losers?

Mr. Scott: As we discovered when we introduced the new social security benefits, if the pattern is changed there will inevitably be many gainers, but if the cost is to be controlled at the point of change there will inevitably be losers. Our study showed that there would be a substantial number of losers and we would want to avoid that. I warn Opposition Members that if they are thinking of going down that route, if ever they have the opportunity, they should bear that point carefully in mind.

I was asked why we settled on 16 hours. We did so not least because we were persuaded in that direction by the many disability organisations which commented on our proposals in "The Way Ahead". I promise the hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire that I understand her point about those unable to work to that extent. If they are on invalidity benefit or severe disablement allowance, they can earn up to £35 per week under the therapeutic earnings rule. Then, perhaps, by gaining experience with that opportunity, they may get beyond the 16-hour limit and be able to work to a greater extent. It is a stepped approach to encouraging people to get back into work and the therapeutic earnings provision is important.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) congratulated us and recognised our efforts to improve the pattern of benefits. I think that my hon. Friend was the author of the original phrase targeted at the Opposition—that it is all very well for them to promise the earth and to deliver the International Monetary Fund. He recognises that steady improvement in meeting the needs of disabled people is being achieved in a structure within which we are playing our part in the Government's overall economic strategy.

My hon. Friend mentioned the independent living fund and recognised that we have doubled provision for next year to £62 million. The arrangements for community care are planned to come into operation in April 1993. That will obviously have an impact on the caseload in terms of those helped by the independent living fund. We shall obviously have to consider what transitional arrangements to make for existing beneficiaries and perhaps a small number of new cases. In general, beyond 1993 the ILF caseload should be looking towards local authorities under the community care provisions rather than to central Government.

My hon. Friend and others mentioned the problem with Motability when mobility allowance is granted for less than three years. Well over 70 per cent. of mobility allowance awards are made for life. Clearly, there is no problem in any of their cases. If problems arise as a result of the new arrangements, I will certainly discuss them with Motability to see whether there is some practical way of overcoming them.

I was grateful for one speech from the Opposition side of the House which gave a general welcome to the proposals, but went on to raise several points which were properly recognised as being more appropriate for discussion in Committee. Several hon. Members se volunteer to serve on the Committee, and I look f to welcoming them aboard in due course.

I know of the problems that were raised by t Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lof and of his devotion to the cause of miners who suff the three terrible respiratory diseases associated w industry. People under retirement age could qualify various benefits that are available. Over retireme they could qualify for the care components of t benefits. I hope that that will be of some support fo As I have said, I know of the hon. Gentleman campaign and how much it is appreciated by tho suffer from those debilitating conditions.

The hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. mentioned agoraphobia. I cannot say that every who suffers from agoraphobia would qualify mobility component, but that is certainly one of the we had in mind when we designed the exten mobility allowance within the new benefit. I disagreed with the hon. Gentleman at one point seemed to be suggesting that we were trying to brib back to work. In three and a half years of meet discussing with disabled people, I have found that majority of them want to work. They have a drivi to be able to earn their own living and acquire the and self-respect of which I spoke earlier. The d working allowance will be a tremendous encour for them to do that.

The hon. Member for Antrim, South (Mr. F referred to awards of compensation, and in the pa circumstances of Northern Ireland, with whic familiar, to compensation perhaps for terrorist a If money is given to someone in compensatio personal injury or accident, there is a simple ans put the money in trust as it is then not regarded a for the purposes of income-related benefits.

Mr. Wigley *indicated assent.*

Mr. Scott: The hon. Member for Caernarfon agreement.

I said that I wanted to make a particular poi the improvements that we plan to make in adju and assessment procedures. Since I have been Department, there has been considerable dissati with some aspects of those procedures. The new that we intend to introduce will be more speedy a streamlined and will provide a simple and effectiv to the public. We are anxious to achieve that. Ther one claim form, one adjudication system f components, and a significant reduction in examinations, thereby improving the scope for with claims more speedily. A second-tier review me dissatisfied claimants will be able to have their looked at again quickly by another adjudicatio without going straight to a tribunal with all th implicit in that procedure.

I believe that we shall be able to reduce the input by making the decisions by admin adjudication officers—reflecting the policy intent the important factor is not the medical condition effect that it has on people's care and mobility n intend to place the emphasis firmly on self-assessm on supplementary evidence from those in contact

claimant, giving proper weight to the judgment of those in the best position to know the effect that a claimant's condition has on his or her life.

Mr. Allen McKay: Will more notice be taken of the general practitioner? Time and again, there is a difference of opinion between the general practitioner and the departmental officer, with a lot of controversy and in some cases loss of benefit, although some claims are later deemed to be correct.

Mr. Scott: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State made that point in his opening speech. In essence, the best that an examining medical practitioner can do is to take a snapshot of the person's condition on the day on which he sees that disabled person. Many conditions relapse or progress at different times. It is much better to rely on the evidence of someone continuously in touch with the disabled person who can give a much better and longer-term assessment of their condition and the effect on their way of life. That will be an improvement. It will also make the best use of scarce medical resources. When we need an examination or judgment of one sort or another, we shall be able to have higher standards. The system will be cost-effective. For the first time, too, we shall be introducing a system in which people with attendance needs will have independent rights of appeal. The balance of membership of the disability appeal tribunals again shifts the emphasis from medical conditions to considerations of care and mobility needs. All those matters will result in substantial improvements, and they have been warmly welcomed by many disability organisations.

The full package of measures in "The Way Ahead" and in the Bill will mean extra help for 850,000 disabled people, and £300 million added on in 1993-94 to the £8·3 billion already being spent on the long-term sick and disabled. We shall remove the rigid distinction in the present benefit structure between ability and inability to work and have a more comprehensive, generous and coherent system of disability benefits than ever before. I believe that we are laying down firm foundations for the future structure of our benefits system which will considerably benefit disabled people. The two allowances in the Bill are wholly beneficial and should be welcomed by the whole House. I commend the Bill to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time, and committed to a Standing Committee, pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

DISABILITY LIVING ALLOWANCE AND DISABILITY WORKING ALLOWANCE BILL

[Money]

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Disability Living Allowance and Disability Working Allowance Bill, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of—

(a) disability living allowances;

(b) disability working allowances;

(c) any increase attributable to the introduction of disability living allowance and the establishment of disability appeal tribunals in the administrative expenses of the Secretary of State or other government department in carrying the Social Security Act 1975 into effect which are payable out of money provided by Parliament;

(d) any increase attributable to the introduction of disability working allowance in the expenses of the Secretary of State attributable to the Social Security Act 1986 which are so payable;

(e) any sums payable by the Secretary of State in respect of the expenses of the Disability Living Allowance Advisory Board;

(f) any increase in the sums payable by way of severe disablement allowance which is attributable to a provision of the Act relating to persons who cease to be entitled to disability working allowances;

(g) any sums payable out of money provided by Parliament into the National Insurance Fund in consequence of the operation of any enactment or regulations relating to disability working allowances;

(h) any increase attributable to this Act in the sums payable out of money provided by Parliament under section 70 of the Transport Act 1982 in respect of applicants for exemption from wearing seat belts.
—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

DISABILITY LIVING ALLOWANCE AND DISABILITY WORKING ALLOWANCE BILL

[Ways and Means]

Resolved,

That any Act resulting from the Disability Living Allowance and Disability Working Allowance Bill may make provision—

(a) amending the definition of disabled person in sections 74 and 89 of the Inheritance Tax Act 1984;

(b) for payments by way of adjustment to be made out of the National Insurance Fund into the Consolidated Fund in consequence of the operation of any enactment or regulations relating to disability working allowance.—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

Armed Forces Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

7.49 pm

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Archie Hamilton): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

The main purpose of the Bill is, like its predecessors, to continue in force for a further five years the Army Act 1955, the Air Force Act 1955 and the Naval Discipline Act 1957 which together form the statutory framework for discipline in the services. Unless renewed by Act of Parliament by the end of December next year, those Acts will expire.

Clause 1, therefore, is straightforward. It provides, as I have mentioned, for the service discipline Acts to continue in force for a further year and for their renewal thereafter on an annual basis by Order in Council for a maximum of four further years.

Much of the rest of the Bill, however, contains provisions designed to bring service law closer into line with changes in civil law over the past five years in so far as it is sensible and practical to do so. Consequently the Bill covers a range of subjects and in the time available tonight I shall concentrate on its main provisions.

Clauses 2 to 5 make amendments to existing provisions relating to the passing of custodial sentences on young offenders under 21 to bring service law into line with the current provisions of civil law in this area.

Under the discipline Acts a court martial and standing civilian court—which is equivalent to a magistrates court trying civilians overseas—already have sentencing powers in respect of young offenders which mirror the powers of civil criminal courts in this country. However, the grounds on which such courts may pass a sentence on a young offender of custody for life or make a custodial order which provides for the detention of the offender in an appropriate civil institution in the United Kingdom do not reflect changes to civil law made by the Criminal Justice Act 1988.

Consequently, clause 2 introduces new grounds which must be satisfied before a service court can impose a custodial sentence. Those are that the circumstances, including the gravity of the offence, are such that had the offender been over 21 he would have been sentenced to imprisonment and that the offender qualifies for a custodial sentence.

Further provisions made in the Criminal Justice Act 1988 require the court to record the grounds on which it believes that the offender qualifies for a custodial sentence, to announce them in open court and to explain to the offender in ordinary language why it is imposing a custodial sentence. We have similarly adopted those provisions for service courts.

Clauses 7, 8 and 9 are all concerned with extending the power of service courts and of commanding officers in the Navy in respect of personal injury cases. They introduce a new sentencing power which for some years has been available to civilian criminal courts in England and Wales and which reinforces the belief that it is right and proper that an offender should compensate his victim personally to the extent that he is able to do so.

Clauses 7 and 8 deal with the sentencing of service personnel and extend the power of courts martial and of commanding officers in the Navy to award pay as compensation to cover personal injury expense, loss or damage.

The inclusion of commanding officers in proposals but not those in the other two se their greater summary powers. Select Com with successive armed forces Bills have operational requirement for commanding Navy to have quite extensive powers jurisdiction.

Clause 9 makes similar provision for civi by court martial or standing civilian cou power to award stoppages, but there is alre make compensation orders and again extended to cover personal injury.

For that new power, the Bill makes pr amount of compensation that may be limited, initially at £2,000. The powers c civilian courts will always be limited magistrates courts in this country could a

A further provision which derives fro Justices Act 1988 is made in clause 10. Th the first time for a statutory right to co miscarriages of justice before courts martia and conditions on which such compensati are the same as the civil law provisions.

It is clearly proper that such a statuto exist in service as well as civil law and that the appointment of assessors of such comp same way. I add that, like the Home Of retaining our existing ex gratia arrange payment of compensation for miscarriages fall outside the scope of the statutory sche do not anticipate any increase in public e because the clause introduces a separately on public funds, I will be asking the Hou approve an appropriate money resolution

I return to the subject of civilians. In pa concentrate on the significant changes that in service law affecting children and youn the age of 17. It often comes as a surprise to that civilians can be subject to service la new—arrangements have existed since current law, many of the provisions in the discipline Acts are applied to certain civil

The number of civilians accompany abroad, either as dependants or in a profes is considerable. There are more than 30,0 alone, although, of course, that number w Given that number, it is inevitable that so the law occur. Nevertheless, it has long be civilians should, as far as possible, be sub and punishments provided for at home should not be disadvantaged by virtue of t with the armed forces. This is the basis for abolishes the power of courts martial and s courts to make a reception order. Those service law equivalent overseas of a c criminal disposal and place the offender in care in the United Kingdom. As hon. Men such orders are being abolished by the Ch and we therefore see no justification in courts to continue making them.

It is, however, part III of the Bill whic most significant changes in the curren service law in respect of children. Clause

with the children of service families at risk overseas. Those provisions are a response to the changes in the civil law enacted in the Children Act.

The detail of the provisions is perhaps best discussed in the Select Committee to which I shall propose that the Bill is committed, although I can assure the House that we have at all times been concerned to ensure that the welfare of the child is paramount.

I shall now take a little time to explain some of the thinking behind the proposals to introduce orders providing for the assessment and protection of children at risk. Those are closely based on child assessment orders and emergency protection orders under the 1989 Act. I would like in particular to acknowledge the considerable assistance we have had from the Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen's Families Association in the framing of the proposals. It will, of course, continue to play a key role in dealing with these matters.

In this sensitive area, and even though the number of cases involved is, thankfully, small, it is right that such matters are dealt with under the law rather than administratively in order to protect the rights of both the children and the parents involved. Since 1981, service law has provided for the removal of children from their families overseas where they were believed to be at risk. The provisions largely mirror those of existing civil law.

We are building on these provisions by giving certain officers new powers to make orders for the assessment and protection of children. The assessment order is completely new, as it is in civil law, and provides in certain circumstances for an assessment of the child to determine whether he or she is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm. We envisage such orders always being made with some parental involvement and provision is made for certain people to be notified in advance that an application for such an order is being heard. The protection order is designed to deal with a case which is so serious that the child must be removed from his family as an emergency measure. The grounds for making such an order are the same as will apply to a court in this country making an emergency protection order. In these and a number of other respects, the provisions that we are making mirror those in the Children Act.

We are, however, retaining certain features of existing orders relating to places of safety. The most obvious difference between our provisions and those in the Children Act 1989 is the possible maximum length of the order set out in clause 21. This will remain at 28 days as opposed to the 15 days that will be allowed for under the Children Act. The decision to retain the 28-day limit has been taken after careful consideration and consultation with interested parties.

As the House may know, under current procedures children overseas who are removed to a place of safety under service law may be returned to the United Kingdom, where the order automatically expires after 24 hours. Thereafter, the provisions of the relevant domestic law apply. We are clearly concerned that service parents should be properly involved in those processes in the United Kingdom which determine the longer-term care arrangements for the child. In exceptional cases it can take a few weeks to make all the necessary arrangements with a receiving local authority and for returning the family from overseas. I am satisfied that it is right to provide for such cases.

We expect that few orders will be made for th maximum period and do not envisage that any will b made for that length from the outset. Clause 22 make special provision for the periodic review of protectio orders and for their discharge. No period of over six day will elapse without a requirement for the order to be tes by a review, a request for an extension of the order or a application for the discharge of the order. Th fundamental aim is that a protection order will remain i force for only so long as the conditions exist which mu be satisfied for such an order to be made in the first plac and never beyond 28 days. I hope that the House wi welcome these changes as a sensible and practical respons to developments in civil law.

Finally, I should like to mention briefly two of the othe clauses in the Bill. Clauses 14 and 15 are designed to brin up to date the existing provisions in the discipline Acts fo making deductions from pay in respect of maintenance Although there are longstanding provisions protecting th pay of service personnel, we have no wish that they shoul escape their obligations to pay maintenance for wives an children, particularly when ordered by a court. Recen changes in the civil law have changed the power of court in the United Kingdom to make orders, and the change that we are making simply ensure that where courts hav the power to make orders there is corresponding power t make deductions from the service man's pay.

I do not propose to comment specifically on the othe provisions in the Bill. Some make small changes t rationalise or update provisions in Acts relating to th armed forces, while those of a minor editorial or technica nature are set out in schedule 2. All are covered in th memorandum printed with the Bill.

I hope that the House will agree that we have used th opportunity of renewing the service discipline Acts t make some significant and useful steps to improve them We in the House rightly pay tribute to the work of th armed services in the responsible and sometime dangerous work that they do. We have many reasons to b indebted to them. It is our responsibility to ensure that th special codes of law to which service men and servic women are subject and which are central to th maintenance of discipline and morale provide a prope framework to enable the services to continue to operat fairly, effectively and efficiently. The Bill is primarily designed to ensure that the system enshrined in the servic discipline Acts best serves those purposes.

8.3 pm

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): I thank the Minister fo his clear exposition and explanation of the Bill. I mus admit that, since the debate was scheduled, I have agonised over what many of the clauses in the Bill mean. The Minister has helped me enormously this evening, and I am sure that he will help us enormously as we progress through the deliberations of the Select Committee.

I begin by echoing the Minister's tribute to our armed forces, who work in such difficult conditions, often in danger of their lives, in this country and abroad. The Opposition join the Minister in paying tribute to service men and service women. The peculiar nature of the Bill is that it comes round every five years, so it gives an opportunity for hon. Members to address the problems of service life and discipline in general. The various clauses of the Bill contain amendments to existing Acts. Perusal of

[Mr. Allan Rogers]

the Bill is undertaken not by a Standing Committee but by an ad hoc Select Committee. The Select Committee can consider all aspects of service life and discipline, not only the specific matters dealt with in the Bill. Those specific matters will be dealt with in greater or less detail by my hon. Friend the Member for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid) later in the debate if he catches your eye, Madam Deputy Speaker, and in the Select Committee.

Whatever we might do or say specifically or generally, we must always remember that our service people are first of all citizens and that our armed forces do not exist in a vacuum. They must be seen in the context of society at large. We should accept the need to parallel, wherever practicable and possible, military and civilian law. When a person joins the armed forces, his civilian status is modified by the superimposition of military status, with certain rights and freedoms restricted to preserve military discipline and readiness.

When the previous Bill was considered five years ago, it was clear from the proceedings of the Committee and discussions during the remaining stages of the Bill that there were several difficulties and disagreements about the work of the Committee. Some hon. Members were deeply unhappy about the procedure followed. May I give the Minister an assurance that the Opposition do not want a repetition of that? We hope to be able to work closely with the Government in examining the Bill.

However, we have some points to make on issues which were raised five years ago and are still matters for concern. My earlier remarks that the services do not operate in a vacuum and about the need, wherever possible and practicable, to bring military law into line with civilian law are pertinent. The matters that we may well want to consider in the Select Committee are the operation of emergency powers, the establishment of service personnel organisations, the composition of courts martial, drug and alcohol abuse in the services, homosexuality, the death penalty, racial discrimination, the rights of ethnic minorities and the problems of bullying in the armed forces.

I shall not rehearse the arguments about the composition of courts martial; I hope that we can finish fairly quickly. However, I wish to give the reasons why we want to discuss the composition of courts martial in the Select Committee. At the last review of the armed forces, there were strong calls for senior non-commissioned officers to be included in courts martial. That was rejected by the Government on various grounds. They used as their argument the Lewis committee report published in 1946, which, on the basis of statistics gathered at that time, said that officers who had risen through the ranks could fairly represent the other ranks.

But, of course, as a result of the war, the composition of the forces was different in 1946. According to the statistics of the Ministry of Defence, it is certainly no longer the case that many officers have risen through the ranks. In 1986, only 22 per cent. of officers had risen from the ranks. Those of us who have served in the armed forces know that only in specialised areas and specialised trades do officers rise from the ranks. Therefore, there is every reason to suppose that officers are now far more remote from the other ranks than when the Lewis committee reported.

Another argument advanced for not al
to courts martial was that officers had g
and knowledge than other ranks. Again,
have served in the armed forces realise th
case. I do not think that many senior warr
Army would give way on experience to
Without our NCOs, our armed services
difficulties. I shall not labour the point no
like to examine the matter in Committee

The second issue is the establishr
personnel organisations. I emphasise
talking about trade unions in the armed f
realise that trade unions could not play
such a disciplined area. Some service me
trade unions, and those in trade sect
encouraged to join unions, especially p
from the armed forces, in order to hel
between service life and civilian life.

It is obvious to all hon. Members th
people are disgruntled about not being
themselves. I am sure that we have all rec
service men who ask us to keep their na
for fear of reaction from their superior of
that means that there is something wro
forces. I can see no reason for any Gove
the development of some form of person

I have said that I recognise the difficult
operating in the forces, but we need some
consultation. I do not suggest that out of
but in a profound belief that such organis
to prevent the considerable haemorrhag
of skilled men and women, who have bee
expense to a high standard of competen

For example, in 1982, the prema
personnel from the armed forces was 16
present rate is 27,000 a year, which mea
has almost doubled over the last seven
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Homosexuality in the armed forces w
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in civilian life and those in a military con
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proposes to give Navy courts martial the
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that is so.

Drug and alcohol abuse was also discu
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need to look at this matter again. All t
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I represent a Welsh constituency and
regiment, and I have been greatly lobb
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tribal and national loyalties that are used in recruitment to our regiments. We shall want to discuss that in Committee. Perhaps the Minister could have a word with the Secretary of State about the reorganisation of Army districts.

Other problems brought to our attention recently relate to families in Germany who have to relocate to Britain. They encounter problems about education and housing, and young married women face severe problems with their families in Germany and in Britain when their husbands are abroad in the Gulf and they find difficulty in coping.

We are disappointed that the Government are not responding immediately to the important issues raised in the recent Stephen Anderson case, especially in view of the release last January of the Peat, Marwick, McLintock study of racial discrimination and ethnic minorities in the armed forces. The study was commissioned because of universal concern about racial discrimination in the Army, especially in the elite guards regiments. We accept that the Government are not standing still on the issue, and I praise them for what they have already done. However, they are not proceeding quickly on the matter and substantial shortcomings are evident in the Government's ethnic monitoring. Those shortcomings were outlined in the 1987-88 report of the Select Committee on Defence.

The case of Stephen Anderson demonstrates that the carrying out of surveys and studies at the point of recruitment does little to outline or monitor discrimination and abuse at later stages of a service man's career. Lord Justice Taylor and Mr. Justice Morland were quite right to ask the Army Board to look again at this matter in a freshly constituted board, so that fairness and justice can be achieved. Just as important as achieving justice in this case, the judges said that the Army internal procedures were "seriously defective".

We shall look to the Government in Committee to suggest amendments to the Bill and to those procedures so that the serious defects in procedures can be rectified as soon as possible. In seeking that, we are not trying to make a political point but are trying to ensure that racial abuse, bullying and discrimination are exposed and rooted out to the ultimate benefit of all, not just the victims but the poor, twisted, pathetic perpetrators of these crimes.

The Calcutt report was published just after the Select Committee on Defence last reported to the House. I remind the House that the committee inquired into the activities of the service police in Cyprus, which led to service men being brought before a court. It was established that the activities, standards and code of practice of the police needed to be revised. The Calcutt recommendations were concerned with practice rather than the law. The Opposition were pleased to see the issue of a code of practice. Again we congratulate the Government on implementing that in the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984.

Calcutt made only one recommendation that might be embodied in legislation—in paragraph 6.6, about the potential conflict between the need to learn the nature and significance of a breach of security and the need to bring the offender to justice. Perhaps in Committee the Government can suggest some possibilities in that area.

My last general point is about the problems of the largest regiment in the British Army which, oddly enough, operates in a limited area of Britain. That regiment is, of course, the Ulster Defence Regiment. The last time the Committee considered this matter there was some aggravation about it. We want to return to it, because the main problem is the controversy surrounding the UI about allegations of collusion with loyalist paramilita and the harassment of nationalist civilians. The Stev inquiry, set up to investigate those allegations, reported May, but, in the event, it concentrated more on ways which to prevent future problems rather than assessing scale of the existing problem.

The Stevens inquiry made a number of recommen tions concerning the Army and the UDR. The recommendations relate to better screening of recruits members and the investigation of complaints agai members of the Army. Given the tense and diffic situation that pertains in Northern Ireland, agents of Crown must act fairly and properly. We are extrem concerned about the criminality differential between civilian population and members of the UDR. It significant that the level of criminality among members the UDR is twice that of the general civilian populati

Obviously, the UDR operates under great strain an is composed mainly of part-timers. My hon. Friend Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNama has suggested that the regiment should consist of full-ti members as soon as possible to effect better training discipline.

The events of the past year and the past few days ha created a new backdrop for any deliberations on defen Those political changes will have a profound impact up the future shape of our armed forces and our service m Morale in the Army, Navy and Air Force as t numerically decline is a vital factor. That is why we m take this opportunity to ensure that the laws governi service life and discipline are framed for the 21st centu rather than bogged down in the 19th.

8.21 pm

Mr. Keith Mans (Wyre): I welcome clause 2, whi relates to sentences for young offenders, and clause which deals with maintenance payments. I also welco the general effect of the Bill, which means that discipline Acts relating to the Army, Air Force and Na are brought closer into line with each other and civili law.

The present three armed forces Acts do not cover grey area relating to injuries to people when they may may not be on duty. Often, it is only after the event t it occurs to an individual that he was off duty and therefo not entitled to the various types of compensation availa when he is on duty. There should be a tighter definition the terms of duty, so that all our service men know wh to expect in certain circumstances. Problems often occ for example, as a result of sports injuries.

Although problems relating to insurance are n directly related to the Bill, they have a bearing on it. M types of insurance for people in the services are sligh more expensive than for their civilian counterparts. Tho who fly, for example, carry a loading on their insurance. the past few weeks, a number of people who have been s to the Gulf have had great difficulty in discovering wheth their insurance policies provide adequate cover.

Insurance business is changing all the time, and should ensure that service men have a better idea abo whether their policies are adequate when posted to particular area. They should receive more advice befo such postings, so that they do not take out various typ of insurance that turn out to be absolutely hopeless.

[Mr. Keith Mans]

I agree with what the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) said about drugs. We are lucky, because we do not have anything like the problem suffered on the other side of the Atlantic. We should not be complacent, however, because many of our young service men will mix with young people who are likely to take drugs. We must ensure that our young service men receive the best education on drugs so that they know the risks they run from them and are aware of the extra problems that drugs pose for them as service men.

In civilian life, it may be possible to take certain drugs that do not have an immediate effect upon one's job, but that is not so in the services. If someone services a high-performance aircraft while they are not in a tip-top condition, the results can be catastrophic for the hardware and the pilot. It is important that young service men are aware of the risks they run if they indulge in drugs.

I agree with the hon. Member for Rhonnda that, in times of change, it is important to pay attention to morale. There is a great deal of uncertainty in the armed forces now—units may be amalgamated and loyalties must change. Most service men are only too ready to make such changes, and many understand that change is part of their everyday life. They must, however, be kept informed about what is happening. Nothing annoys service men more than to be kept in the dark, only to find out indirectly what is to happen in the next weeks or months.

Separation can also have an effect on morale, especially when we consider the lengths of tour of service men in the Gulf or in the Falklands. People in different arms of the same service or in different services serving alongside one another may find that they have completely different conditions of service. When my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence recently toured the Gulf, an announcement was made about changes in the tour lengths decided upon by the Air Force and the Army. When people in different services work with each other it is important to ensure that tour lengths do not lower morale.

Another cause of poor morale is allowances—given their complicated nature, we must ensure that, when people move from area to area, they do not suffer as a result. A service man cannot refuse to go to a particular part of the world, but he may not realise that that posting has a significant change on his allowances and pay, albeit for a short time. It is important to explain any changes beforehand. If such explanations had been made before the deployment of our armed forces to the Gulf, we would not have faced the problems that arose—which, although not great, may affect morale.

It is a pleasure to welcome the Bill.

8.28 pm

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): You will have noticed, Madam Deputy Speaker, that the atmosphere in the Chamber this evening is rather calmer than it is elsewhere in the building. That is perhaps a significant reminder to us that, whatever political battles may take place outside, the business of the House still requires to be transacted, and perhaps no business of the House is more significant or important than the Armed Forces Bill. We discuss the Bill on the eve of a debate about confidence in Her Majesty's Government. Some of us may feel that that makes our proceedings like the porter's scene in "Macbeth", but without the textual or dramatic significance.

We should not, however, take these proceedings as a matter of course. What is happening this evening is deeply rooted in the constitutional history of the United Kingdom, involving as it does the supremacy of Parliament and the suppression of what was once the Royal Prerogative. The fact that an Armed Forces Act is required every five years to prevent the Army Act 1955, the Air Force Act 1955 and the Naval Discipline Act 1957 from lapsing is no mere administrative inconvenience; it reflects the fact that control of our armed forces and their disciplines is part of the exclusive responsibility of this honourable House.

Thus, every five years, we are given an important opportunity to review military law. I hope that the House will conclude that this is not a matter to be lightly cast aside. In the past it has been suggested that the statute should have permanent effect, but I am reluctant to allow that to happen as the opportunity that we are given every five years allows continual scrutiny of the facts and circumstances of service life.

Although the Bill deals with discipline, the invoking of its provisions—or those of the three service discipline Acts—is invariably due to a breakdown in discipline. The success of any armed service, or any unit within it, depends on self-discipline, not on statutory provisions. Reference has already been made to the special loyalty that attaches to some regiments in connection with their association with certain parts of the country. Coming from Scotland, I readily appreciate that, and there is no doubt that such geographical associations frequently make a substantial contribution to loyalty and morale. I hope that, in the changing circumstances that we all perceive, any proposals that are made will be sensitive to those associations, on the understanding that to remove them insensitively could well affect the loyalty and, indeed, the efficiency of those serving in the armed forces.

Of course, a special case cannot be made for every regiment or every regiment ever formed would have continued to exist. I hope, however, that in view of the difficult and changing circumstances that will necessarily follow the adoption of "Options for Change" or any similar proposal the Government will show the necessary sensitivity.

As has already been said, the Bill gives us an opportunity to consider more than just the proposals that it contains. My approach, which springs as much from my interest in legal affairs as from my interest in defence, is that the distinction between civilian and military justice can be justified only if it is made necessary by the special circumstances of military service as opposed to civilian life. Two examples have already been mentioned—the continued existence of the death penalty, and the law relating to homosexuality. In both regards, there is a sharp distinction between civilian and service life.

I hope that the Select Committee will examine with great care the arguments for the retention of the death penalty in service discipline. For my part, I find it very difficult to see how that penalty can still be justified in 1990, no matter how extreme the circumstances. I am in no doubt about its application in civilian life, which I have consistently opposed. Of course, I have no direct experience of service life.

As for homosexuality, there is little doubt that the climate of opinion in civilian life is much more tolerant than that reflected in the statutory provisions relating to the services. I recognise that specific considerations and difficulties may arise from the proximity in which service men are forced to work, and the nature of the relationships that are formed. It is possible for members of one rank to take advantage—both literally and metaphorically—of members of a lower rank. None the less, I feel that we should consider this issue with great care and sensitivity.

The Bill raises some very complex legal issues. I do not think that it is appropriate to deal with all of them in detail on Second Reading. I welcome the provisions relating to children. I am also particularly interested in those concerned with compensation—especially the creation, under clause 10, of a statutory right to compensation for wrongful conviction by court martial. I hope that the Select Committee will examine both the conduct and the constitution of courts martial.

I have had two experiences of courts martial, one professional and one relating to a constituent. As a civilian lawyer, I defended a naval rating and was particularly impressed by the extent to which the service lawyers went out of their way to ensure that a civilian lawyer who might not necessarily be familiar with the procedures was properly advised and, to some extent, properly instructed. I was also impressed by the skill with which the judge advocate conducted the part of the proceedings which lay within his responsibility. I came away with a high regard for naval discipline as reflected in the conduct of that court martial.

My constituency experience involved a service man sentenced, in the first instance, to seven years' imprisonment for an offence that I need not detail. By the time he had exhausted the appeal procedures available to him, his sentence had been reduced to six months and he had to be released immediately because he had already, in effect, served a six-month sentence.

As I have said, it is important to examine the constitutional implications of courts martial. A civilian on trial before a jury on a serious criminal charge is tried by a group of people drawn by lot—at random—from the electoral register. Such a person is truly tried by his peers. It may not be appropriate to institute in service discipline a system that parallels that precisely in the form of courts martial, but we should surely ask whether it is possible to ensure that the constitution of courts martial more effectively reflects the overall constitution of the armed forces.

We must also try to achieve some consistency in sentencing. I have already mentioned the experience of one of my constituents. It cannot be right for a person to be subject in the first instance to a seven-year sentence, and then find it reduced to six months. I know of no parallel in civil criminal justice—certainly I have encountered none in my professional experience—and I feel that we should devote some consideration to the way in which the powers available to courts martial are exercised.

Those are just a few of the issues that the Bill will allow us to consider. In some respects, it confers a constitutional imperative—if it did not pass into law, service discipline would cease to have any proper statutory basis. For that reason, in the House this evening, the Bill can hardly be regarded as controversial. I am happy to support it and, if the lot falls to me, I look forward to raising some of the issues to which I have referred briefly on an occasion when they will be given deeper and wider consideration.

8.40 pm

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith (Wealden): It is invariably a pleasure to follow the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell), who speaks with not only great wisdom and insight, but superb knowledge of the law. I am happy to say that I have a knowledge only of basic aspects of the law which keeps me out of trouble. Therefore, I was surprised to hear that those who serve in the Army are subject to the death penalty. I served for five years in the Army and was unaware of that. I thought that the only threat to my life was from the enemy, not from lack of service to the law. As someone who strongly opposes the death penalty, I wish the hon. and learned Gentleman well in his crusade in Committee.

As the hon. and learned Gentleman rightly said, there is no doubt that we must remember that we are dealing with a different society in the armed services when considering homosexuality. Much as I welcome the Bill, the armed services society is different from that of civilian life and, where that difference is apparent, it must show itself in the law.

The Bill is extraordinarily welcome. It comes as a surprise to many of us that civilians can be subject to military law. We can understand that in some "combat areas"—a phrase introduced by Hollywood—that application of military law should rightly apply. However, when there are so many families abroad and civilians helping with important maintenance tasks, it seems remarkably archaic that they should not have the protection of the law that we have helped to establish and create through the proceedings of the House.

The Government are to be particularly congratulated on the special attention paid to children in part III. One of the best pieces of legislation passed by the Government in their eleven and a half majestic years of administration was the Children Act 1989. It received widespread support from both sides of the House and showed the House at its best. It is particularly important that the changes introduced in the Bill will represent children's interests. As my hon. Friend the Minister said, we must at all times hold in special consideration the welfare of children, which is paramount. We would expect children resident in this country to enjoy the care and protection of the Children Act.

We all welcome the fact that the changes in the law bring military law more into line with civilian law. I certainly welcome it. I have already exhibited my comparatively scant knowledge of the law. The Bill will help to give greater clarity; it will help the soldier, sailor and airman and those who advise them to understand what the law is about.

The Bill is significant because for the first time it makes it a statutory right for members of the armed services to receive compensation for miscarriages of justice before a court martial. That was the very point made by the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East. I have been involved in a court martial and have great respect for the procedures. In many respects, those who come before a court martial seem to get a fairer hearing than they would in some civilian courts. We do not want to destroy that spirit, but a court martial can make an error, so it is a wise

[Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith]

step to give people the statutory right to receive compensation for miscarriages of justice. I welcome the initiative taken by the Government.

8.47 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): I welcome any overhaul of military legislation. Courts martial are important—my experience as a Member of Parliament points to that.

Several years ago, for a former constituent, I raised on the Floor of the House the matter of bullying in the British Army of the Rhine. He came to me and said that he had bruising on his back and was absent without leave. He said that his wife and mother were worried that if he went back to his regiment in West Germany in those circumstances he might face death. The bullying consisted of him and his comrades in arms being tied to the back of a lorry and being hit with a sledge hammer. As a result, he suffered serious injuries, the consequences of which he still suffers.

I raised the matter with the then Minister and received a guarantee that my constituent would not be sent back to West Germany pending a full inquiry, which was carried out. There were courts martial and this apparently outlandish story, told to me in a local hall at an advice surgery, was proved beyond peradventure. A number of people were disciplined by court martial; some were imprisoned, some expelled with dishonour from the Army and some fined. It did not bring that sort of bullying to an end because repetitions of it have been reported in the papers. I am not as familiar with them as I was with that case. The soldier who had gone absent without leave and so committed an offence was fully justified in taking the case to court martial.

As a consequence of the begrudging and unkindly attitude of the Army to what might be termed a whistle blower, an attempt was made to charge him for his uniform with which they had issued him after arrangements had already been made for him to be discharged from the Army. As I understand it, discussions continue about compensation. The Army did not bring the matter to a gracious conclusion because the soldier had exposed a sore point, a difficulty. At that time, the cold war was still being maintained and the soldier was more frightened of the British Army members involved in the bullying than of the Russians, which was not exactly a bull propaganda point for the maintenance of the nuclear deterrent.

I recognise the importance of military law, but I share the reservation that the death penalty should be removed as in civilian life. If there were a referendum on the issue I do not think there would be a majority to restore the death penalty. Arguments deployed against the death penalty are overwhelming and have been accepted by succeeding generations growing into adulthood without the death penalty. They accept it as a more just application of the law that, where mistakes are made, they can be rectified. That was not so in the infamous case of Timothy Evans, who was hanged in error. Military law should be brought into line with civilian law, and that is why I welcome the appointment of a Select Committee. It is an unusual procedure, but one that will provide an opportunity for such alterations to be made to the Bill. There should not be double standards—one for civilian life and one for military life.

I certainly support proposals in the Bill for the standardisation of the Children Act in nearly every respect within military legislation. When the Minister boasts of doing that, he should consider the validity of his assertion and examine the death penalty being retained in military law, as against civilian law.

Questions should be asked about the application of law in the armed forces. In our age the use of armed might has much wider consequences than ever before. The Minister can advise the Prime Minister to use nuclear weapons that would bring death and destruction on a scale hitherto unknown which would reduce some areas of the planet to a radioactive desert. What if someone objects to the deployment and use of nuclear weapons? What would be his position under military law and under the alterations in this Bill? What would be the position of a member of the armed forces who said that the Government were not carrying out their obligations under clause 6 of the United Nations nuclear non-proliferation treaty—a solemn and binding obligation? What if such a person refused to carry out his superior's orders to load nuclear weapons into an aircraft carrier or plane? I note that the Minister is smiling when I first mentioned that treaty he thought that we were not signatories to it. Now he knows better because of my pressure, and I am pleased to have educated Ministers in this and other ways.

These are important matters and I want to suggest some alterations to the legislation that would help to take account of these great difficulties.

We know that it is an offence to give military secrets to the enemy, whoever the enemy is now. Temporarily, the enemy is Iraq and Saddam Hussein, but in the longer run the Government are fast running out of targets for our nuclear weapons. What right does a service man or woman have to discuss dangers arising from cracks in the Polaris fleet, for instance? On Monday this week it was widely reported that the Ministry of Defence

"would confirm only that one Polaris boat is still at sea. 'We do not comment on the operational deployment or technical state of our submarines,' its spokesman said."

If a service man or woman is worried about cracks in the primary water-cooling circuit of the nuclear power plant of a submarine and goes to his or her superior officer, that officer can say, "Shut your mouth." The service man in question might start glowing with radioactivity halfway through the voyage, but that could not be taken into account as reasonable justification for raising the point or blowing the whistle to the newspapers. Presumably that would be regarded as an act of treachery, even though it might save lives.

The same report continued:

"According to the independent nuclear engineer, John Large, the defect appears to be cracking in the primary watercooling circuit where it re-enters the reactor pressure vessel, an appallingly difficult place to effect repairs because of radioactivity and the cramped situation—especially if there is no time to remove the reactor fuel and let the system cool down first."

It appears that someone in the services may have provided this information so that something could be done about it. There should be some means of ensuring that people who use dangerous equipment can raise these issues without the threat of punishment. They should be able to question the use and deployment of the nuclear deterrent. That is the

moral right because there are no more immoral weapons on the face of the planet than nuclear weapons. I shall not go into that now because it is a little wide of the Bill; I merely point out that service people might be involved in the deployment and testing of weapons that are to be sold to countries to which the Government were urged by a United Nations resolution of 1988—passed in the General Assembly—not to sell such weapons. What are service people to do in such circumstances? The binding nature of military legislation, as amended by the Bill, places a heavy burden on them.

The United Nations resolution made it plain that member states were to reinforce their national systems of control over the arms trade. All hon. Members agree that that is splendid, but when the Opposition highlighted the supplies of arms to Iraq and the channel of arms through Thailand from western European countries, including from allies such as West Germany, people raised their eyebrows and said that these weapons could be used against our boys in the Gulf, which would be quite wrong. What should a service person, who has raised such issues with his superior officer but feels that nothing is being done and that a cover-up is taking place, do? How long have the cracks in the Polaris fleet been known to the operators of the submarines?

I urge the Minister to consider a report by the Common Market assembly. I call it an assembly because I do not give it much credence. It was a good Government job creation scheme when I found myself resting after 1983, but that is about all. The Government, however, refer to it as a Parliament. That was the title that they gave it in the Single European Act 1986. The argument in the Conservative party is about the degree of commitment that we should exhibit to the Common Market. I merely mention this to show that the European Parliament is a source of information that the Government does value.

The report, dated February 1984 and numbered PE84.688/fin./Ann II, concerns the right of members of the armed forces to form associations. I hope that this legislation can be amended later to allow trade unions to be formed in the armed forces. They already exist in the armed forces of other countries. We may not wish to emulate those countries, but I think that they provide useful examples. I note that the Minister of Trade has just come in for a chat about other matters, which no doubt are concentrating his attention and that of other Tory Members in clumps and congregations throughout the House. None the less, he will be interested to know that the right to form associations is not granted only in a minority of member states—Greece, France and Italy. In Ireland the right is available but not exercised, and in the United Kingdom the right to form an association is granted, but without the right to be consulted. The Minister said earlier that the Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen's Families Association had been consulted, and I welcome that useful development. I urge the Minister to go a little further. Associations have a valuable part to play, but it would not be a long step, after associations, to form independent trade unions. Service men and service women would be more likely to trust trade unions to deal with these matters.

The Minister said—I do not dispute it—that the House and the nation at large are indebted to those who serve in the armed forces. If we are indebted to them and if there is a move to form trade unions, why not recognise our indebtedness by providing the armed forces with the opportunity to form independent trade unions? In some of the member states of the Common Market professional organisations have the right to be consulted. However, they have no negotiating rights. In Belgium, Germany, Netherlands and Luxembourg those organisations have the right to be consulted. Denmark is the one member state in which professional organisations have negotiating rights.

When I asked the Prime Minister whether she had been to Denmark, she said that there had been useful talks and negotiations with Denmark. She did not tell the Prime Minister of Denmark how wrong it was for the professional organisations to have negotiating rights. She said that Denmark was a loyal member of NATO. The armed forces personnel in Denmark have the right to enter into negotiations. If that happens in Denmark, it could happen in the United Kingdom.

In the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, another member state, article 11.5 of its constitution guarantees the freedom, by law, to form trade unions. Service men are allowed to organise or join non-political unions. The majority of them are members of the Syndicat Professionel de la Force Publique, which is part of the Confederation Generale de la Fonction Publique. If it is good enough for Luxembourg, it should be good enough for other member states. The Minister may say that there is only a tiny number of people in Luxembourg, but it is a member state of the Common Market and is represented in all its institutions.

The report makes it clear that in Denmark service men have the same negotiating rights and the same right to conclude agreements as all other Government employees. There are various groups of professional organisations for serving officers, reserve officers and serving soldiers. Those associations negotiate on general pay and working conditions with the Ministry of Defence. They voluntarily renounce the right to strike. Agreement has been reached, therefore, with the trade unions that the right to strike should not be exercised.

In the Netherlands, as in the Federal Republic of Germany, officials and service men are not entitled to take part in negotiations. However, the associations must be consulted when the legal status of service men is affected by ministerial rulings, and so on. A central consultative committee has been set up for this purpose with the Secretary of State of the Netherlands as chairman. It meets twice a month and discusses all legal conditions and provisions which affect service men and the policies, guidelines and general principles of the personnel programme. That is exactly the kind of body which could provide effective negotiating and consultative procedures, if they were enshrined in the sort of legislation that we are discussing.

At a lower level in the Netherlands, there are consultative committees in each navy unit, at company, battalion and barrack level for the army and for each air force base or unit. They consider individual cases or questions relating to working conditions. That is exactly the point that I made about the cracks in the Polaris submarine power plants. Instead of courts martial and the panoply of military law bearing down on people, thus intimidating them into not presenting important information, consultative committees would allow such matters to be raised without confrontation. In the Netherlands, there is freedom of the press, including the right to distribute

[Mr. Bob Cryer]

broadsheets. There is no right to strike, but soldiers in uniform may stage demonstrations when they are not on duty.

The Netherlands is a member of NATO and of the Common Market. Provision is made in other member states of the Common Market for dealing with these matters, thus reducing the need for the confrontation that is created by the application of military legislation. In the Federal Republic of Germany, which is even stronger following unification,

"the right to form associations to safeguard and improve working and economic conditions is guaranteed to everyone and to all trades, occupations and professions."

That quotation is from article 9(3) of the basic law. Article 17(1) says:

"The right to form associations is therefore a fundamental right under the constitution and this right may not be restricted by laws concerning military service."

The idea of trade unions for our armed forces is not new —they operate in some EC countries.

The Government should seriously consider that. Indeed, they may have to do so. The Conservative party is arguing about the advance of unification. The Prime Minister, having capitulated on everything else, is saying, "We do not want economic and monetary union as a step towards a federal state." There may be a measure in five years' time to harmonise all these standards. Make no mistake, the Common Market is shifting towards a common foreign policy and a common defence policy, but hon. Members do not seem to understand what is happening.

Our service men and women should have at least the same trade union rights as those of our EC partners. That would ensure proper and adequate representation where the first procedures of discipline are used and at courts martial. The hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) spoke highly of the procedures in courts martial because he attended one as an impartial observer. Some courts martial are not impartial because accused persons' representatives are part of the military. However, that would be improved by an independent body for the armed forces.

I therefore offer a critical welcome to parts of the Bill. I hope that the Minister will at least examine my proposals, but I say that with little hope because, until last week, one of the characteristics of this Conservative Government was complacency. Circumstances have a funny way of catching up with people and their complacency is blown to shreds, as happened to the Government this week. I hope that they will closely consider my suggestions because they will help to improve the law. I do not deny that the Bill makes improvements, but there is always room for improvement, even in this broken-backed Conservative Government.

9.7 pm

Sir Alan Glyn (Windsor and Maidenhead): I welcome this composite Bill. I well remember that some 30 years ago we had to have such a Bill every year and to deal with each service separately.

I particularly like the provisions for compensation and for children. I emphasise the importance of bringing civilian law into line with military law, in so far as that is possible. Most people agree that civilian life is not the same as service life. Service men are confined and live in special circumstances.

Two things will have to be considered very carefully —the death penalty and homosexuality. The conditions in which service men live are so different from those of ordinary people, except possibly prisoners.

Leave in the three services is different. Perhaps there could be equality of leave for troops serving in the Gulf in the different services, although I know that that might be difficult because the three services are so different.

When I served on courts martial, I always thought that more civilian expertise should be involved. That now happens and is an entirely satisfactory procedure. I should be grateful if my hon. Friend the Minister would explain how disciplinary action will be altered when there are more women in the services.

The Opposition referred to loyalty. It is important that men from certain areas have particular affiliations. So far as it is humanly possible, Scottish regiments or county regiments should be preserved. That will be an extremely hard task. I come from a regular cavalry regiment, members of which were drawn from all over England. Preserving the regional character of a cavalry regiment is not so important, but it is particularly important to have loyalty to territorial and yeomanry regiments. Men like to be with their comrades. There is tremendous loyalty to the regiment to which one belongs. I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to consider that point.

I am afraid that trade unions are not to my liking. They may be suitable in civilian life, but they are certainly not suitable for the Army. On that point, I disagree with the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer).

Great thought has been given to the changes in the Bill and I welcome it as a whole.

9.12 pm

Mr. Julian Brazier (Canterbury): Like other hon. Members, I welcome the Bill. I should like to make three observations. First, it was a tradition in most Governments' legislation that, wherever members of the armed services subject to military discipline happened to be, they were treated as far as possible as though they were in the country. For example, under the Representation of the People Act 1983, service men have the right to vote wherever they may be. That happened long before the voting reforms introduced by the Government.

There has been an extraordinary two-sided division in the tax and allowances system. In the case of a service man subject to full military discipline and serving in Germany, Cyprus or the Gulf, his wife and his dependants pay the same income tax and national insurance contributions as their civilian counterparts, but they are not eligible for the same social security benefits as their civilian counterparts. Last year, I dealt with a case involving the wife of a soldier who had served 22 years and had been subject to full military discipline. The wife would normally have been eligible for severe disablement allowance, but because her husband had served abroad for so long she found that she was ineligible. That is an injustice. It is hard that service men who have been paying the same taxes and national insurance contributions as their civilian counterparts should be ineligible for certain social security benefits because they have served their country abroad.

Secondly, I wish to refer to military discipline as it affects NCOs—especially senior NCOs—and warrant officers in the Territorial Army. There is a curious anomaly whereby officers serving in the Territorial Army are subject to military discipline in the same way as their regular counterparts but other ranks—still, I believe, even including warrant officers—are subject to military discipline only when they are training. That has a perverse effect and in some circumstances undermines the status of those TA personnel vis-a-vis their regular counterparts, the permanent staff instructors who serve with the unit.

To take an example, let us suppose that an exercise is planned for a small group of soldiers involving the use of weapons or explosives or some other form of activity which could lead to difficulties. In some units, it is extremely difficult to gain approval for such an exercise if neither an officer nor a member of the permanent staff is present because there is no one who can be made legally accountable if anything goes seriously wrong. I therefore suggest to my hon. Friend the Minister that we might consider the possibility of making warrant officers and senior NCOs in the TA subject to the same military discipline as their counterparts in the Regular Army.

Finally, regimental affiliations were mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Windsor and Maidenhead (Sir A. Glyn) and touched on by the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) and are extremely important to discipline. The Government are absolutely right to examine the number of sites that we occupy at present as not only the armed forces themselves but the defence research establishments are spread over far too many sites. Nevertheless, although I was not an infantryman during most of my territorial service, I believe that we should tread wearily when it comes to the eight infantry depots, two of which gave exceptional value for money during the Falklands war. A very large proportion of soldiers who fought in the Falklands had come recently from two of those depots—the airborne forces depot at Aldershot and the Guards depot at Pirbright. Some of them went straight into action only weeks after leaving the depots and performed extremely strongly.

The culture and disciplines in the various regiments tend to vary and the two depots to which I have referred are at the extremes. The Brigade of Guards whose depot is at Pirbright consists of admirable regiments—I know that my hon. Friend the Minister was a distinguished member of one of them—strongly based on firm, old-fashioned discipline. At the opposite end are our airborne forces, who have always based their principles on self-discipline, initiative in service and, if my hon. Friend the Member for Aldershot (Mr. Critchley) is to be believed, quite a lot of fighting off duty.

I understand that it has been proposed that the airborne forces and the Brigade of Guards should be put into the same depot, so that they would share the same NAAFI, the same canteen. That is the surest recipe I can imagine for a breakdown in discipline, fighting off duty and the destruction of both cultures. I suggest to my hon. Friend the Minister that, of all the ways to save land and improve efficiency, the review of the eight infantry depots is the last that he should consider if he wants value for money and wishes to encourage the fighting culture of the armed forces—by which, of course, I mean fighting of the kind in which we want them to engage.

Like other hon. Members on both sides of the House, I welcome the Bill and look forward to hearing the outcome of the Committee's deliberations.

9.18 pm

Dr. John Reid (Motherwell, North): This is one of the relatively rare occasions on which we have the opportunity to review the workings of the machinery of discipline in the armed forces. Although our debate is overshadowed somewhat by events taking place elsewhere in the Palace, it is none the less an important debate, as the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) said, because discipline—both individual and collective—lies at the heart of the efficiency and effectiveness of our armed forces.

We have had a brief but wide-ranging debate. The hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East mentioned the sensitivity about and attachment to the regimental system, and several hon. Members took up the same point. The Opposition are well aware of that. My hon. Friend the Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill) pointed out in a recent debate that, when the "Save the Argylls" campaign was running strongly in Scotland, many of his friends were so attached to the Argylls that they signed the petition five or six times.

The hon. Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith) referred to homosexuality and the death penalty, although I hasten to add that he did not link the two. He revealed that he had been "involved" in a court martial, although he did not reveal in what capacity. Perhaps it is just as well that, until this evening, he was unaware that the death penalty was still in use in the armed forces.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) made possibly the most wide-ranging speech. He managed to discuss the death penalty, the important issue of billing, the nuclear non-proliferation treaty, cracks in the cooling systems on Polaris submarines, the representation of service men and women throughout Europe, the European Commission and the leadership contest in the Conservative party—all in a debate on a Bill that deals with Army discipline. That was a testimony to his skill.

The hon. Member for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier) raised the important issues of inequalities in taxation conditions and the anomalies in discipline regulations in the Territorial Army. He gave us all food for thought. The hon. Member for Windsor and Maidenhead (Sir A. Glyn) emphasised the importance of bringing civilian law and military law together. He made it plain that he is opposed to trade unions in military life, although I suspect that, if we pushed him a little further, he would be opposed to trade unions in civilian life as well; but I might be wrong about that.

We have had a wide-ranging discussion tonight, but many of the Bill's details will be discussed later in the ad hoc Select Committee. This quinquennial review occurs so rarely that it is vital that the Government use the occasion to address problems related to morale and discipline that are persistently raised in the intervening years. As my hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) said, there are a number of issues—such as service personnel organisation or the composition of courts martial—which we feel the Bill fails to address. We have mentioned them briefly tonight, and we will return to them in Committee.

It is important that we get the Bill right, because another major review is unlikely for another four or five

[Dr. John Reid]

years. Of course amendments can be made from time to time, but the Bill essentially sets the course for the next five years. The Opposition approach the Bill on discipline in the Army and in the other forces on the premise that has underlain that of successive Governments, namely, that military law should approximate to civil law as closely as possible, allowing for the particular need, which we accept, for discipline in the armed forces. We therefore welcome the fact that the Bill incorporates many of the features of civil enactments and in particular the Criminal Justice Act 1988 and the Children Act 1989.

It is right that the standard of justice for our service men and women should be no less than that expected by civilians. The forum of justice and discipline may differ, but the standard must be no less. It is also right that the protection of children of service families should be no less than that for civilian families. We therefore welcome the regulations in clause 4 that extend to courts martial the requirement, to which civilian courts are already subject, that a court imposing a custodial sentence on a young offender should give reasons why it is satisfied that he or she qualifies for a particular sentence. A court martial will now also have to explain to the offender in open court why it is passing a particular sentence. That is as it should be.

Clauses 7 to 9 similarly bring the service regulations into line with civilian practice by allowing the appropriate authorities the power to award stoppages as compensation for personal injury. It is right that, when an offender has insufficient means to pay a fine and compensation, compensation should take precedence.

Clauses 17 to 23 reflect growing concern in the country about child abuse. We do not suggest that it is any greater in the armed services than anywhere else. Part of the reason for the growing concern about child abuse may not be an increase in child abuse in general but a greater recognition that abuse exists and a willingness to report it. We welcome clauses 17 to 23 and we support the extension of the provision of child assessment orders into the armed forces, but we will want to examine more closely in Committee the logistic arguments behind the difference in the period for which orders are granted in civilian and military life.

If there are some aspects of the Bill to be welcomed, there are also some major omissions. In many ways, the Bill represents a lost opportunity—an opportunity that could have been used to tackle some of the persistent issues. I shall deal with one or two, which have already been mentioned by several hon. Members, including my hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda. As my hon. Friend said, one issue is the vexed question of service personnel organisation and representation. We believe that morale and discipline in the armed forces are interlinked and that representation is crucial to morale.

The hon. Member for Wyre (Mr. Mans) spoke of the uncertainties about "Options For Change" and the insecurity that is felt by many service men because of the lack of information. Some form of service personnel organisation would help to overcome those difficulties through the provision of information, and would indeed contribute to morale. The persistent claim that officers can best and fully represent the views and interests of other ranks and that there is therefore no need for any other representative mechanism does not hold water. It may be the view of the Government, it may be the view Ministry of Defence, it may even be the view of officers, but it most definitely is not the view ordinary soldier, sailor or airman.

The Minister of State may ask, "How do you k because he knows that I am far too young to hav through conscription. With the courtesy of the Hou with some assistance from the Minister of S managed to spend a month with the Army this year not some formal ministerial visit, when the world continually of fresh paint, but a hands-on ope courtesy of the armed forces parliamentary scheme my recent experience in the Army, I can t Government that the grievance that was most of most loudly declared by the toms, apart fro accommodation and the poll tax, was about repr tion. When will the Government face the fa complaints and grievances can be adequately dea only by proper consultative procedures?

As my hon. Friend made plain, we are not cal trade unions, although my hon. Friend the Mem Bradford, South did, and we are certainly not adv any involvement of service personnel in political However, there is scope for allowing service perso join a properly constituted organisation that ca representations on their behalf. Several organisat highly effective in representing the views of ex personnel—for example, the Royal British Legio loyalty to and support for the services is unques and unquestioned. Why should similar organ representing active service personnel be a supportive? The people in today's professional forces are highly responsible; of course they can be properly to run such an organisation. We shall r that matter in Committee.

There is another issue which the Governme ducked. It is a tenet of British justice that an person is entitled to a trial by his or her peers. T and learned Member for Fife, North-East rai important principle. We accept the difficulties of that principle completely and directly to the arme However, the Government have refused even to that direction. In refusing to include senior NCOs martial, they are failing to take account of change as my hon. Friend pointed out, have taken place in 44 years in the constitution of the officer corp armed services.

As my hon. Friend rightly pointed out, after th world war, when the Lewis committee looked at in 1946, most officers had come up through the r could not be accused of being remote from oth Nowadays, only one officer in five comes up thr ranks, so the Government have not moved far e the direction of allowing service men to be jud group of their peers as far as possible.

Nor do we accept that senior NCOs are n unqualified in terms of experience to sit on court Given the considerable experience that man serving in Northern Ireland have developed in de questions of civil law, the Government's argume to look rather threadbare.

The Minister may recall that, in paragraphs of the report of the Select Committee on D 1985-86, the Government were asked to consid courts martial or standing civilian courts the pow suspended sentences. In clause 12, that has bee

relation to naval courts martial, but there does not appear to be any such move in relation to the Army or the Air Force courts martial, or to standing civilian courts. I hope that the Minister will address that point and explain that selectivity, or will he do so at some future stage?

Many other issues could be mentioned tonight. The hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East asked about equality of treatment for homosexuals, my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South asked about bullying and the hon. Member for Wyre spoke about the problems of drug abuse. We shall return to those issues in Committee.

One matter which merits attention now has only been mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda. It has been the subject of considerable attention and at least some activity since the last Select Committee report. I refer to racial discrimination in the Army. Following concern about racial discrimination surfacing in 1986, when the Commission for Racial Equality felt that it had to go public in expressing its anxiety, the Defence Select Committee reported on its investigation in a report entitled "Ethnic monitoring and the armed forces" and, as has been mentioned, earlier this year the Ministry of Defence published a study of the subject commissioned from Peat, Marwick, McLintock.

Why is there no mention of that issue in the Bill? When does the Minister expect to be able to bring forward proposals on that matter? In particular, does the fact that there is no mention of it in the Bill mean that the Government are satisfied with the present position? If not, why was the opportunity not taken to deal with the matter in this legislation.

If the moral issues involved in racial discrimination were not compelling enough—I believe that they are—there are pragmatic considerations to which the Government should attend. Despite the cuts which might be expected with "Options for Change", there is no doubt that, during the next few years, recruitment will prove difficult. We must ensure a fair and equitable distribution of representation of the ethnic minorities in the Army. There are good moral, administrative and pragmatic grounds for that. That is another issue that we shall pursue in Committee.

As I have said, earlier this year I spent about a month with the armed forces, and I wish to record my deep appreciation for all that they did for me and my colleagues. But Opposition Members also want to make plain their deep appreciation of the commitment and dedication of our service men and women. In many ways, that goes without saying, but it bears repetition tonight, when many of those same service men and women await the outcome of diplomatic and economic pressure on Iraq.

They would not be human if they did not face the future with some trepidation. We know that they will also face the future with resolution, courage, determination and discipline which is the hallmark of the British armed forces. As we conclude the debate tonight, we are entitled to reflect that the Bill and the regulations on Army discipline will be applied only in a minority of cases. For the vast majority of our service men and service women, the normal discipline is self-discipline and dedication. We owe them our gratitude and commitment for their discipline and dedication, and the Opposition gladly give it.

9.34 pm

Mr. Archie Hamilton: With the leave of the House, I first welcome the hon. Member for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid), following what I believe was his first speech from the Front Bench. He will find that debates on defence are normally pretty friendly—too friendly, some of us would say. I have heard a terrible rumour that it was the Leader of the Opposition who recognised that his Front Bench spokesmen on defence needed sharpening up. That is why we are more than happy to welcome the hon. Member for Motherwell, North, who will add to the quality of our debates. He did extremely well this evening as he had obviously read the Bill, which put him in a somewhat exclusive minority.

Several hon. Members, including the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers), the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) and the hon. Member for Motherwell, North, mentioned the composition of courts martial. The inclusion of service men below the rank of commissioned officer in courts martial was last fully considered in 1985, when it was concluded that such a proposal would not improve the quality of the court nor the prospect of the appearance of justice being done. There is no evidence of any desire in the services to change the composition of the courts martial and the present system enjoys a high degree of confidence from all ranks.

The hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East mentioned the lack of consistency in sentencing. He particularly raised the case of someone who was sentenced to seven years and whose sentence was then reduced to six months. Sentencing guidelines are available to courts martial. In a serious case, for example in the Army, a judge advocate trained in sentencing would advise the court about the appropriate sentence. Sentences are subject to confirmation and review, again with the advice of the office of the Judge Advocate General. Permanent presidents of courts martial also receive training and advice from the office of the Judge Advocate General about sentencing. Without knowing the full facts of the case raised by the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East, one can only speculate as to why the sentence imposed was so drastically reduced on review.

The hon. Members for Rhondda, for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) and for Motherwell, North raised the old chestnut of whether the services should have their own trade union. We take the view that active involvement in trade unions or professional associations would run counter to the principle that service personnel should not engage in any activity which might conflict with their service duty.

The hon. Member for Rhondda said that service men cannot express themselves, if I remember his words correctly. I found that a slightly patronising remark. When I have gone around talking to service men in all three services, I have found that the one thing from which they do not seem to suffer is an inability to express themselves. They have raised many complaints with me and have told me how they believe that their conditions should be improved, and so forth.

Mr. Rogers: I regret that the Minister has introduced such a discordant note. He has completely misquoted me and seems to have misunderstood what I said. I said that at some time all hon. Members have received letters from service men, many of whom asked to remain anonymous.

[Mr. Rogers]

They expressed their problems without any difficulty, but wished to remain anonymous for fear of recrimination or retribution from their superior officers. If the Minister does not recognise that as a fact of life, he is living in cloud cuckoo land.

Mr. Hamilton: There is an understood chain of command through which people can register complaints. They use that, and they often register complaints to Ministers. The hon. Gentleman should look at the record tomorrow to see whether he said that service men cannot express themselves, because I wrote it down as he mentioned it.

The hon. Member for Rhondda and the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East referred to homosexual activity. I believe that their general feeling was that there should be increased harmonisation between military and civil law on this matter. The Bill makes no change to the law on homosexual activity. It therefore remains the case that service personnel may be prosecuted under the discipline Acts for homosexual activity which would not be an offence under the civil criminal law. That is in recognition of the different circumstances in the services, where people live in closed communities on and off duty and often under stress. Such conditions and the need for absolute trust and confidence between all ranks require that potentially disruptive influence of homosexual practices to be excluded. That view was explained and endorsed by the Select Committee in relation to the last Armed Forces Bill, in 1986, and nothing has occurred since then to give rise to a change of policy.

The hon. Member for Rhondda spoke of the military districts and the reorganisation about which he has heard rumours. I am afraid that I am not in a position to tell him what proposals we are bringing forward on that, but I hope that I shall be able to do so shortly. I can tell the House and my hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier) that under "Options for Change" we are taking a radical look at the whole infrastructure of the three armed services. There is no way in which we can do that painlessly. It will result in depots being closed and in restructuring of the armed forces in many areas of the country. I am afraid that if we are to get the so-called peace dividend and to make savings on the defence budget there will be local problems. We shall, of course, deal with them as sensitively as we can.

The hon. Members for Rhondda and for Motherwell, North raised the question of racial discrimination. In particular, the hon. Member for Rhondda mentioned the Anderson case. We recently received the final judgment in the case of Stephen Anderson. The Ministry of Defence will consider that judgment to decide what changes are necessary in service procedures to conform with the guidance in the judgment or whether to appeal against the judgment on any aspect. In the meantime, a re-hearing of Mr. Anderson's case will be set in hand. As originally proposed by the Ministry of Defence, a board of inquiry will be set up to investigate all facts relevant to the case prior to consideration by the Army Board in the light of the judgment. Any changes required as a result of the Anderson case will not require primary legislation. The procedures involved are set out in Queen's regulations.

On the general point of racial discrimination, I can tell the House that the services are fully integrated, non-discriminatory organisations and that t tion is tolerated. Any complaint of racial dis a member of the armed forces will be full under a redress of grievance procedure a action will be taken against those involved. that there is still far too low a percentage racial minorities entering the armed forc doing all that we can to address that pr stimulate recruitment in areas with larg people from racial minorities.

The hon. Member for Rhondda also Stevens inquiry and the Ulster Defence R report, Mr. Stevens said that his was an thorough inquiry by some of the mo detectives in the United Kingdom. He e both the Regular Army and the UDR h fully and whole-heartedly with the inquir the conclusion that the passing of informat widespread nor institutionalised but was small number of individuals. We have agreeing with Mr. Stevens's conclusions for screening recruits and handling informa tightened. We have already taken some ini Mr. Stevens makes clear, further steps we the course of the inquiry. A dedicated established to screen all applicants to transfers from the Regular Army will be same full screening process. The procedure of recognition material was tightened up i further stringent methods were introduce Mr. Stevens recognises those initiatives.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wy spoke about compensation for injuries a relating to whether an individual is on or o Friend mentioned sports injuries. Service to claim compensation for injuries caused sports activity, which is treated as an on-d same way as that person can claim for inju the course of his employment. He demonstrate that his injury was attributab on the part of the service, but the Depar that it is satisfied on that point, will offe compensation payment.

My hon. Friend also referred to th insurance premiums charged to membe forces. In normal circumstances, those miums apply to personnel in high-risk occ air crew or divers and we already refund 9 additional cost of their premiums withi hon. Friend will be pleased to know that recently extended to include all personnel notice to serve in the Gulf who choose policies. We have also negotiated s schemes for such personnel.

My hon. Friend also raised the questio I am aware that many hon. Members are about the extent of drug abuse in th Although there are, almost inevitably, so abuse in the armed forces, it is not a Nevertheless, it is a subject which is utmost seriousness and my colleagues a personal interest in it. The services are need for constant vigilance and steps ha improve protection from and the pre abuse. A service education programm

includes information on the dangers of crack. I gather that 85 per cent. of those convicted of drug offences within the armed forces are dismissed.

My hon. Friend also referred to the need to keep service men informed of the changes as a result of "Options for Change". I recognise that need, but we always have a difficulty because the House likes to be informed first about what is going on. It is difficult to ensure that the services are informed simultaneously, but we make every effort to do so.

The death penalty is another old topic which came up for discussion. My hon. Friend the Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith) did not realise that the death penalty is still valid for offences under the service discipline Acts. It might be of interest to know that the death penalty still applies for assisting the enemy, serious misconduct in action, obstructing operations, mutiny and failure to suppress mutiny. The important point about those five offences is that they require a positive act of treachery—for instance, deliberately assisting the enemy or actively preventing operations against the enemy. Such acts are likely not only to jeopardise national security, but to put the lives of other service men at direct risk. The nearest civil criminal offence of this nature would be an act of high treason, for which the death penalty is still mandatory.

The hon. Member for Bradford, South mentioned bullying and related a horrific story about a person he knew who had been bullied. The services take a serious view of bullying and it has been made clear throughout the forces that bullying and ill treatment will not be tolerated. A range of measures to combat bullying have been introduced, including the banning of initiation ceremonies. In the Army a new man-management training package has been developed. Of the 252 allegations of bullying in the Army reported since January 1986, 92 were substantiated and disciplinary action was taken. In 145 cases the allegations were not substantiated. Others are still under investigation. There have been three substantiated cases in 1990. Allegations of bullying substantiated by courts martial or summary disciplinary action are as follows: in 1986, 16 cases; in 1987, 31 cases; in 1988, 17 cases; and in 1989, 25 cases. The figures are bad and we should do something about them, but they are not so appalling as some might imagine.

My hon. Friend the Member for Windsor and Maidenhead (Sir A. Glyn) raised the pertinent question, now that women are playing a much bigger role in the three armed services, as to whether there would be any change in the disciplinary arrangements. No change is necessary to take account of the increased number of women in the services. For a long time, female personnel have been subject to the same disciplinary provisions as their male counterparts. The only change is that a women's wing is being constructed at Colchester to take account of the larger numbers. In practice, as in civilian life, women are much less likely to commit crimes than men are.

My hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury raised the question of unemployment benefit, and the difficulties that people in the services have in that respect. I reassure him that discussions are continuing between the Min Defence and the Department of Social Security ab payment of unemployment benefit to spouses of personnel overseas. I know that my hon. Friend glad to hear that.

The hon. Members for Rhondda and for Mot North raised the question of suspended senten courts martial and standing civilian courts. As t Member for Rhondda rightly pointed out, cla extends to naval courts martial the power to s sentences of imprisonment and detention, as reco ed by the Select Committee on the last Bill. Howe have decided not to extend the power to courts m the Army and the RAF, or to commanding off those services exercising summary jurisdiction. martial sentences in the Army and the RAF—unli in the Navy—are subject to confirmation, a confirming officer has wide powers to alter se although he may not impose a greater or more sentence than that imposed by the court. To giv martial the power to suspend sentences in their ow would inhibit the powers of confirming officers wh the final word on sentence, and who may already s sentences of imprisonment and detention.

Mr. Rogers: I do not understand the Minister's the court has the right to suspend sentences in th why cannot the same apply to the other two servic argument that further confirmation is required d hold water. We shall return to this matter in th Committee discussions, where we shall want to h more substantial arguments than the Minis produced today.

Mr. Hamilton: I think that it would be right Select Committee to examine the matter in more d it troubles the Committee, we shall be more than h examine the matter again.

I commend the Bill to the House. It will do m bring the legal system covering the armed services i with their civilian counterparts. That is the least can do for them in recognition of the magnificent m they play.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time.

Bill committed to a Select Committee Chapman.]

ARMED FORCES BILL [MONEY]

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting f Armed Forces Bill, it is expedient to authorise the p out of money provided by Parliament of—

(a) any sums payable by the Secretary of State of compensation for miscarriages of justic courts-martial; and

(b) any sums payable by way of remuner allowances to a person appointed by the Sec State to assess the amount of any such co tion.—*[Mr. Chapman.]*

Trade Statistics

9.53 pm

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. John Maples): I beg to move,

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Statistics of Trade Act 1947 (Amendment of Schedule) Order 1990 be made in the form of the draft laid before this House on 7th November.

Towards the end of the 1980s, it was widely thought——

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Groups of Conservative Members all over the House are busy plotting about next week's ballot, but I am sure that you take exception to groups of Conservative Members plotting in the Chamber and taking no notice of the legislation being discussed.

Mr. Speaker: I doubt whether the hon. Members are plotting; I should think that they are discussing with great interest the debate that is about to begin.

Mr. Roger Knapman (Stroud): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker.

During questions to the Leader of the House last Thursday, the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) said that he believed in nuclear and other disarmament, so we cannot understand what interest the debate could have for the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Speaker: I hope that all hon. Members remaining in the Chamber have an interest in the debate.

Mr. Maples: It is an exciting subject, Mr. Speaker.

Towards the end of the 1980s, it was widely thought that the quality of the national accounts had deteriorated. Three criticisms were generally levelled: first, that wide discrepancies had opened up between the three measures of the gross domestic product; secondly, that successive measures of GDP and the balance of payments were subject to substantial revisions; and, thirdly, that the sector balancing items had grown unacceptably large, especially in the personal and the overseas sectors.

Those weaknesses created difficulties for economic policy makers, particularly for the then Chancellor of the Exchequer in constructing his 1988 Budget. The problems were clear to Treasury Ministers. They were also obvious to the Select Committee on the Treasury and Civil Service, which commented on the role that the poor quality of the statistics had played in recent economic policy making. The Committee recommended that the Government should undertake an investigation into the operation of the various Departments involved in the collection of national account statistics with a view to improving the reliability of those accounts.

In June 1989, the Government announced the setting up of a scrutiny committee of economic statistics. That was carried out the following year, and led to the publication in 1989 of what has come to be known as the Pickford report. The scrutiny revealed an extensive awareness of the problems with micro-economic statistics, and reiterated the three main areas of concern—discrepancies between GDP measures, revisions and large balancing items. It concluded that the problems were

"deep seated, pervasive, have multiple causes and have existed for a long time."

The scrutiny committee proposed a num
where improvements were needed, or where
was necessary, and made recommendations
first, to change the way in which macro-econ
are collected or compiled; secondly, to pr
work on statistical issues to identify impro
thirdly, to create a statistical
[Interruption.]

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): Those
Members should go outside.

Mr. Maples: I am grateful to the hon. Ge
is an exciting subject.

The third improvement suggested wa
statistical organisation more likely to mee
users in a cost-effective manner.

As a consequence of that third group of
tions, we set up a review to examine the
issues. On 5 April 1989, the Prime Ministe
the House the enlargement of the Central S
as a separate Government Department res
Chancellor of the Exchequer. The reor
31 July 1989, brought together the
Department of Trade and Industry's bus
office and the Department of Employment'
for the retail prices index and the fami
survey. It enabled the new CSO to pay mo
priorities for improving the national accou

It soon became apparent to my right h
Chancellor of the Exchequer that even
ments would be insufficient to solve
problems quickly enough. In April 199
Treasury and Civil Service Committee tha
"concerned about the statistical base".
We needed,

"the best level of statistics we can get for me
what is happening to the economy."

Despite the Pickford improvements, he s
discussing with the director of the CSO
done to improve the general quality of eco

Shortly after that, on 17 May,
announced his package of further measure
quality of statistics. Those were to be in
services, companies and the balance of
services, there will be extensions to the qu
inquiries into the service industries and m
will be collected on external trade in servi
company statistics, the Chancellor annou
quarterly information on capital expe
building and profits would be obtained.

On the balance of payments, the Chanc
that, in addition to improvements on trad
quarterly direct investment inquiry woul
More information would be collected
Kingdom companies' financial transactio
residents. Due to the very severe problems
of payments accounts, which had sh
persistently positive balancing items over
five years, he announced that the CSO wo
member of its staff a year to undertake a
of balance of payments statistics. T
inquiries, including that on company
undertaken as statutory inquiries.

The powers available to the CSO
statistics are embodied in the Statistics of
That Act enables "competent auth

Government Departments including the CSO—to require undertakings to provide statistical information on specified areas of their activities.

The Act includes a schedule which lists the topics on which competent authorities can demand information. Section 5 allows additions to be made to the schedule by Order in Council. Such orders have been made on two previous occasions. However, the schedule, even after these amendments, does not include profits. Therefore, I am seeking the approval of this House for a further amendment to be made.

Company profits make an important contribution to the income measure of gross domestic product. They represent about 15 per cent. of the income measure of GDP. Perhaps more importantly, they are the most volatile component of income, accounting for a large part of the quarter-to-quarter or year-to-year changes in GDP.

Statistics on company profits provide the base from which corporation tax receipts are forecast. They are also important in providing the Government with assessments of the financial position of the company sector. Finally, the statistics are used by Treasury economists in their analysis, modelling and forecasting of the economy.

The Government already compile statistics on company profits, but there are some significant weaknesses in the existing statistical systems. The CSO currently estimates the profits of industrial and commercial companies from Inland Revenue data on assessments for corporation tax. Although substantial adjustments have to be made to bring them into line with the national accounts, these statistics are thought to be soundly based. These data, however, are inevitably not available until some time after profits are earned and also relate only to whole years, not to quarters. For monitoring, forecasting and policy purposes, quarterly data are needed.

In an attempt to meet those needs, tax assessment data are supplemented by a quarterly inquiry asking a sample of companies for information on their profits. Results from those inquiries provide figures for the national accounts for the latest two to three years. The inquiry is voluntary, and many large companies exercise their right not to provide data. Despite several efforts to recruit more companies, the inquiry remains unrepresentative, and lacks a number of large company groups.

As a result, estimates derived from the present quarterly inquiry are weak, and subject to large revisions when the tax assessments data become available two or three years later. For example, the 1987 estimates of industrial and commercial company profits were revised down by £10 billion between April 1988 and the summer of 1990.

It is for these reasons that I seek approval for amending the schedule. By adding the words "profits" and "losses" the CSO will be able to collect up-to-date quarterly information from industrial and commercial companies about their profits on a statutory basis. It will be able to collect statistics from all the largest company groups in the country, not just those which agree to report voluntarily.

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): Many of us, like the Minister, serve on the Treasury and Civil Service Committee. Often private companies are asked to provide information at their own expense and to fill in one form after another, and junior people are asked to fill them in to satisfy the people who gather statistics——

Mr. Cryer: In this Government.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: All Governments have problem of collecting statistics and this Governm done more to try to make them respectable an than any other Government since the war. But ho to make sure that statistics are pure? Until we ha computerised system—and the Government pa why should private companies set their best collecting figures?

Mr. Maples: My hon. Friend makes a val Certainly the number of forms that businesses h in has been greatly reduced by this Government. consulted the CBI and the stock exchange on t and we think that the information that we sha will be readily available from companies with having to do additional work.

Statistics from a statutory inquiry would be better quality, not just because of the greater s inquiry, but because of its better representati statutory inquiry would also produce an earlier a level of response.

A general advantage of statutory inquiries is are more equitable than voluntary ones. Compa respond to voluntary inquiries do so from a sense responsibility. The costs that they incur may be they are still costs that will not be incurred non-responding competitors.

Mr. Spencer Batiste (Elmet): It is importan statistics on which economic decisions are correct, but my hon. Friend will be aware that considerable cost implications for businesses. H to the largest companies. However, it would be the consequences of his inquiries were to be limite companies, particularly as, under this Governm is a booming middle and small business sect worries me is that this will be extended to business sector and will impose even more bu small business men, for which there wil compensation. What does my hon. Friend ha about that?

Mr. Maples: My hon. Friend makes substan same point as that made by my hon. Friend the for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-D must make sure that we do not ask for informatio do not need. However, the Government must ha economic statistics for the management of the Moreover, industrial companies like to have r accurate statistics about what is going on in the Those inquiries are being sent only to abo companies. We are asking each of them for sever information. All that information is, we believ available in their management accounts. We do n that we are imposing additional costs upon them view is supported by the stock exchange Confederation of British Industry.

Mr. Cryer: Will the Minister confirm that s associations have approached the Governm information about their area of manufacturing They do not have that information. As they wish it, they recognise that the only possible body provide it efficiently is the Government.

Mr. Maples: There is certainly something in what the hon. Gentleman says. We receive complaints about the inadequacy of the information that is available just as often as we receive complaints about companies being asked to provide information that they would prefer not to provide.

As the House knows, the Government are very sensitive to the reporting burdens that they impose on businesses. In this case, I believe that that burden must be slightly increased. The reward of better statistics is worth it. We have already consulted the CBI and the stock exchange about the proposals. Both accept the need for accurate statistics and support the introduction of such an inquiry.

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): If it leads to better statistics, can my hon. Friend assure me that gross domestic product figures will finally be made available in their entirety for the Isle of Wight? We have suffered for a very long time from being included in Hampshire's statistics. There is considerable prosperity and industrial growth in Hampshire. Our inclusion in those statistics has caused us considerable grief on a number of occasions, because we should like to know precisely how our own economy is doing.

Mr. Maples: My hon. Friend's sentimentality is admirable, but I am afraid that the answer to his question is no.

The CBI believes that the reporting burden will not be too great as most of the required information can easily be provided from existing sources in most companies. That was confirmed by a number of large companies visited by the CSO a year ago. Any new inquiry is bound to involve some companies in extra work. I shall be discussing the details of the inquiry with the aim of minimising that extra work with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

That explains why the Government have sought the addition of the words "profits" and "losses" to the schedule, but we are seeking further additions: rents, interest and investment income receipts, dividends, interest and tax payments. The reason for their inclusion is mainly related to the collection of information from financial companies.

For national accounts, there is a major difficulty in collecting profits information from financial companies. To the companies themselves, a substantial share of their profits is earned by making a turn on interest rates, or on the price of instruments traded, such as shares or bonds. For the national accounts, interest and dividend flows are viewed as transfers between institutions or people and are not therefore viewed as part of profits.

There is therefore no point in sending out a survey asking financial companies for their profits. The results would be irrelevant to the national accounts. The only way to obtain the required data is to ask companies to provide certain components of their income and expenditure accounts and for the CSO to derive profits in the appropriate terms.

That approach is adopted in existing surveys of various groups of companies. However, most of the surveys are confined to the collection of annual data. Figures for the lastest quarters are simply projections from the latest annual survey. They are subject to revision—sometimes substantial—when the next survey results come round. For example, in August this year, estimates of financial companies' profits were revised down by £4 billion when annual data were substituted for the quarterly projections.

The further additions to the schedule will enable the CSO to block this gap in its statistical base by collecting income and expenditure information from financial companies on a quarterly basis. I do not believe that expansion of collection would add significantly to the burdens on businesses. Most of the information that is likely to be sought is readily available from most companies' accounting systems.

The phrase in the proposed amendment on services is included to make it clear that such information falls within the scope of the Act. Amendment of the schedule will enable the CSO to undertake statutory inquiries of companies to collect information on their United Kingdom profits. The information thus provided will be of significantly better quality than the present estimates. As part of the package of improvements announced by my right hon. Friend, this will be a further step in eliminating the three major problems in the national accounts. It will help to reduce the gaps between the GDP measures; it will reduce the scope for revisions; and it will lead to more coherent accounts for the company sector by reducing its balancing items, particularly for the early estimates. This will be an important contribution to the improvement in the statistical base for economic monitoring, forecasting and policy making.

I commend the motion to the House.

10.10 pm

Dr. Jeremy Bray (Motherwell, South): It is ironic that the last business of the House before the censure debate should be an attempt to reform one of the principal culprits blamed for the Government's and the country's economic difficulties—the disparities and balancing items in the national accounts in recent years, to which the Economic Secretary referred.

To avoid such major mistakes in economic policy as occurred in 1988, it is necessary to have reasonably good statistics, a reasonably good model and reasonable objectives. However, none of those can be blamed for the economic policy mistakes of 1988. It is also necessary for Ministers to pay attention to the evidence, and to use the system of policy analysis intelligently.

I sent a paper to the Treasury shortly after the crash in October 1987, of which I sent a copy to the Economic Secretary this morning, reporting an exercise that I had done on the Treasury model using the Treasury's own policy optimisation programmes on the data and model available at the time. The policy adjustments required, on the Government's own priorities, to take account of the stock market crash were indeed a reduction of interest rates, but by less than 0·5 per cent. and for one year; and a reduction of income tax—but at 0·1 per cent., it was so small as to be effectively zero. The trouble was that the analysis of the situation before the stock market crash was already calling for increases in interest rates and income tax, but that was not acceptable to the Government and they were not prepared to listen. I am sure that comparable information was given to Ministers by Treasury officials.

Certainly, better characterisation of the effect of the housing market, structural reform in housing finance and consumer behaviour were needed. Changes have now been made in the Treasury model. There are now fresh

problems—convergence within the exchange rate mechanism, to name but one. The Treasury has even refused to equip itself to model the problem of competing policy makers with different objectives. Whether it be between countries, within the United Kingdom or even within the Cabinet, the problem of conflicting policy makers would seem to be of some topical interest to the Treasury.

The quality of the Treasury's economic policy analysis, and, more important, the use made of it by Ministers, is not so high as to justify the cut of two thirds, from £1·5 million a year to less than £500,000 in the next academic year, in the funding of external research on economic models by the consortium of the Economic and Social Research Council, the Treasury and the Bank of England. Those funds support the work of the London Business School, the National Institute of Economic and Social Research, Patrick Minford in Liverpool, other friends of the Government and the smaller projects that are producing the new ideas for the future. That is an essential service to the Treasury and the Bank of England, from which they have benefited enormously in recent years.

On the "customer pays" principle, the Treasury and the Bank of England should have taken up the financing of their quasi-executive servicing when the ESRC found it hard to meet urgent new demands for work on the global environment and other matters.

Certainly, however, better statistics are needed, too. Household and consumer behaviour is an important matter, with which the Economic Secretary did not deal and which is not our business tonight. We are dealing with company profits and finance, and services used. Four information systems describe the same activities in the corporate sector: company internal management accounts; company reports and accounts published under the Companies Acts; tax returns to the Inland Revenue; and Government statistical returns, not to mention the returns of banks to the Bank of England under the Banking Act 1987.

It is easy to say that the different systems serve different purposes, but they interact and their incoherence reduces their efficiency and increases the cost to businesses of complying with them. It would be much simpler for companies if their management accounts giving a true and fair account of their companies' position could serve as the basis from which all the other requirements could be met. Attempts at economic and statistical analysis of companies' present reporting of their profits have fallen on stony ground. I doubt whether Government statisticians will be able to make much sense of them, with their jumble of different accounting conventions, varying from company to company. The Institute for Fiscal Studies and the London Business School have put a great deal of effort in this direction. If they are not able to make sense of the picture, I do not see how greater insight could be brought by the Central Statistical Office.

In tabling the order, the Government do not seem to have informed or consulted the Financial Reporting Council and the Accounting Standards Board. The Bank of England recently submitted a paper to the Financial Reporting Council on corporate reporting, summarising three major United Kingdom research studies. Edwards, Kay and Mayer, in their book "The Economic Analysis of Accounting Profitability", have given a convincing economic rationale for accepting value-to-the-owner rules as the basis for the valuation of assets for both economic analysis and company taxation purposes.

The Government should use their powers, not just under the Statistics of Trade Act but, probably more importantly, under section 228 of the Companies Act 1985, to specify a form and content of company accounts which will tell a coherent story about the company to managers, shareholders, investment analysts, employees, creditors, the Inland Revenue and Government statisticians and economists. It will still be necessary to set accounting standards, but the new accounting standards bodies will be given a coherent basis on which they can work. The accountancy profession has not found it easy to agree on a number of conventions, and a lead is needed from the Government in the interests of economic management, good company management, efficient capital markets and realistic wage and pricing behaviour, which needs to be based on information on the profitability of individual companies.

The claim to commercial confidentiality has always been used to resist every extension of disclosure in the interests of greater efficiency. We are talking not about personal information, where there is a basic right to privacy, but about the activities of corporate bodies. There should be a presumption in favour of disclosure. In any particular case, the onus of proof that the preservation of confidentiality is in the public interest should be on those who are arguing for it.

This makes possible a different approach to the integration of the four information systems. The basic report should be the company report and accounts produced by the company for its own purposes to satisfy its own shareholders. Accounting standards working on the foundation of the updated requirements of schedule 4 to the Companies Act should make the published report and accounts a true picture of well designed management accounts within the firm. Statistical returns to Government should be consistent with these and stated to be so in the company report, with the statistical returns subject to audit at least on sample basis.

Already, the Bank of England can call for the auditing of prudential returns required under the Banking Act 1987. If corporation tax definitions were brought within the same system, it would be possible to see much more clearly the effects of corporation tax and changes in it on company behaviour, as well as the response of corporation tax yield to changed economic circumstances. That would improve the quality of the tax base and provide a clearer climate in which companies could compete, take over and merge, and in which competition policy could be formulated and conducted.

The concept of the national accounts should not be sacrosanct. Their purpose is to facilitate the analysis and management of the economy. The apparatus for economic policy analysis has developed enormously since the system of national accounts was conceived, essentially in its present form, 50 years ago. Modern information technology makes it possible to base macro-economic policies on micro-economic behaviour, examining the aggregate of effects on actual companies or on samples of actual households, which is what the Treasury, the Department of Social Security and the Inland Revenue do today. The concept of the national accounts has now been replaced by the much wider date set, with a variety of analytical and modelling tools that can be used to ask particular questions.

Government use accounts for only a small part of the total use of business information and decision support

[Dr. Jeremy Bray]

systems. But the Government have a vital part to play in developing the statutory and operational framework for such systems, most of which will operate, in a distributed way, throughout the economy.

Opposition Members support the present order, but it is only a first and partial step towards giving business and the Government the modern information and decision support systems that they need. I gave the Economic Secretary notice of some questions with which I should like him to deal. I am grateful for the replies that he has given thus far, although I cannot say that they are very satisfactory or reassuring. Opposition Members believe that the House will have to return to these matters in a wider context.

How frequently does the Economic Secretary propose to publish the profits and incomes statistics that he will be collecting under the order, what degree of disaggregation will he offer and will he distinguish between revenue in the United Kingdom and the international revenue of companies?

Finally, let me say in the hon. Gentleman's support, on the question of the burden of the collection of statistics, that he is entirely right that, in some cases, it is more satisfactory to have a statutory basis than a voluntary one. Inquiries carried out by the Department of Trade and Industry and the Central Statistical Office provide good evidence to support that assertion. Those inquiries were first reported in *British Business* on 21 July 1989. Following extensive telephone interviews, an attempt was made to appraise firms' attitudes to completing statistical forms. *British Business* states:

"The results do not suggest that the majority of firms regard statistical form-filling as particularly burdensome. Only about a sixth of firms contributing to voluntary inquiries expressed any sort of negative attitudes in their answer to the most directly relevant question . . . The scrutiny team also noted that only 12 per cent. of all respondents experienced difficulties in completing forms."

A survey of attitudes to reduced statistics of trade under the new Community provisions gave an even clearer picture. Only 39 per cent. of firms said that they were willing to provide voluntary data, but 71 per cent. said that the reduction in detail was damaging to their business. Some 50 per cent. said that it had no effects, and a further 21 per cent. no significant effects, on costs. Some 66 per cent. preferred monthly returns to quarterly returns, and 71 per cent. preferred regular periodic returns to occasional returns.

Conservative Members, when speaking for small companies, often—quite understandably—reflect the views of owner-managers, who are immensely busy and do not want to be bothered, and who play a small part in the overall statistical collection system of Government. In bigger firms, and in many specialist small firms, information collected by Government is essential to the business, not on the secretarial or accounting side, but on the marketing and business planning side. If the Government and hon. Members asked them about their requirements for Government statistics, they would learn that those people would be entirely in favour of improved quality, greater accessibility and greater accuracy.

I therefore hope that the Minister will not be discouraged by some of the reactions of his colleagues and will press on with the improvements in statistics, bearing in mind that a very much more radical reform is required in the interests of both the Government and business.

10.25 pm

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): I note with interest, but without criticism, that the Minister tonight has the advantage of six advisers. The substance of the text of this order comprises seven lines, which I make gives 0·8571428 officials per line. That is of course an entirely useless piece of information, but it could be used for the preparation of statistics to show how many advisers Ministers have on the average night in the House. It is an example of the sort of methodology which political considerations could impose on statisticians under the politically dominated regime for the collection of statistics which we currently have.

Useless statistics do no harm, but politically massaged statistics, of which we have seen much in recent years, can do great harm because they mislead. Above all, they can mislead those who need them most, in particular those concerned with managing industry or dealing with exports.

It is clear from various reports, including the Pickford report to which the Minister referred and which was commissioned by the Cabinet Office, that the Government have had many problems with their economic statistics in recent years. Their forecasts have been seriously out and many measured indicators which should have been giving the same message have diverged. In particular, the measures of gross domestic product expenditure and GDP income have diverged.

The changes proposed in the order, in addition to placing yet another form-filling burden on industry, fail to resolve the real problem underlying the collection of Government statistics and the regime in which Government statisticians operate. I would also be interested to know from the Minister how many of the pieces of information that are now going to be asked for, in the survey of 1,500 companies to which he referred, would be available from a proper examination of the accounts that companies file at Companies house. Is adequate use made of the information provided to Companies house? I wonder whether Companies house is rigid and severe enough on those who do not file their accounts in proper time.

The Royal Statistical Society remains critical. According to Professor Peter Moore, the chairman of one of the Royal Statistical Society's working parties, there is some justification in the widely held public view

"that much statistical information is not of the quality that many users would expect and that, in some instances, it is being used subjectively in the domain of public policy."

That means it is being massaged for political reasons by Ministers.

On 28 July, *The Economist*, a magazine which is frequently not unfavourable to the Government, reflected that

"most international boffins reckon that Britain's statistics—once the world's best—have deteriorated more than anybody else's."

That appeared in an article headed "Numbers not worth crunching", a title which gives a clear idea of the journal's view of Government statistics.

I support several trenchant criticisms that have been made by the Royal Statistical Society. I can divide them into three headings, the first of which is autonomy. In terms of formal constitutional arrangements, the

autonomy of the United Kingdom's statistical system is poorly protected by statute and practice compared with most other developed countries. The order does nothing to improve the situation. In many countries, the statistical agency has total control over publications, with an embargo, generally, on anyone having access until the statistical results are publicly available. That embargo includes the Government and the Minister who is notionally responsible for the statistical agency. That should be the arrangement in the United Kingdom, but the United Kingdom entry in the United Nations handbook makes it clear that the Government statistical service lacks control over publications. It states:

"Decisions on publication of statistical results are the responsibility of the (policy) Department, but the Head of the GSS will be consulted on the more important issues."

Thus it is the case that the Government statistical service is not proof against charges of bad news diversion because its operational environment denies it satisfactory control over the nature and timing of publications. The order does nothing to address that problem.

The major functions of data collection, processing, primary analysis and publication should be ring-fenced and centralised away from ministerial interference. The head of the statistical service should manage the operations and the staff of the service, including his appointees in ministerial Departments. A statistics Act, such as exists in most western countries, is needed to guarantee the autonomy and constitutional position of United Kingdom official statistics.

The second heading is methodology—again something which is not improved in any way by the order. Questions of methodology, definition, scope and timing of publications should be the responsibility of the head of the statistical service. That would strengthen the perceived independence of Government statisticians and the line of professional responsibility to the head of the service on technical matters. Professional identity is weakened in this country because, unlike most other countries, we currently have a decentralised Government statistical service in which most statisticians are bound to have dual loyalty with the service on the one hand, but with line management responsibility to the policy departments—that is to say, the departments in which most of them are embedded—on the other.

It is important that a research unit be set up to strengthen evaluation and methodological research. That would do more than the proposals in the order to improve the reliability of and the credence given to Government statistics.

The third heading is accountability. To put it another way, to whom can the statistician run if he finds that the statistics that he has prepared are being massaged by policy departments for political reasons? At present, the only public mechanism available to the head of the Government statistical service in response to a ministerial decision which might compromise the integrity of the service appears to be a threat of resignation, whereas Government accountants, if they are asked to do something that conflicts with their professional principles, are entitled to ask the Minister for a written instruction which is brought to the notice of the Public Accounts Committee. What is really needed is a national statistical commission to be appointed to safeguard the objectivity, integrity, timeliness and scope of United Kingdom official statistics. It should report annually to Parliament via the sponsoring Minister so that Parliament can be assured that it is free of ministerial interference at any time and at any level.

This is an important order because such great use is made of Government statistics. They are used for the purpose of business, industry and the City in particular. They are also frequently used in the House for the justification of political argument. Unfortunately, they are not always accurate. There are ways of making them much more accurate, but the order fails in any way to address the ways in which that may be achieved.

10.34 pm

Mr. Maples: The hon. Member for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray) referred to the cut in the budget for work on the Treasury model. That decision was made by the Economic and Social Research Council, not by the Treasury. We are committed to paying 20 per cent. of that budget and would have been willing to pay 20 per cent. of a higher budget. That was the council's choice and priority.

Dr. Bray: Did the ESRC ask the Government's chief economic adviser whether the Treasury would increase its contribution to make good the cuts in the funding so that the ESRC could see its way to providing what was essentially a service to the Treasury?

Mr. Maples: I do not know the answer to that question, but I will let the hon. Gentleman have an answer. My understanding is that the ESRC made the decision and the Treasury would have been willing to pay its 20 per cent. share, as it has done in the past, of whatever the ESRC chose to spend.

It would be nice to have one set of company accounts rather than separate ones for corporate reporting, tax returns and statistics, but that would not be possible or practical. They serve different purposes and there is no such thing as a correct set of company accounts. Many different assumptions can be made, and for tax purposes there are particular rules on depreciation or what expenses are allowable for tax purposes. Therefore, it would never be possible to have the same annual accounts for shareholders as for the Inland Revenue.

On statistics, there are major differences—for instance, on the inclusion of overseas activities of United Kingdom groups which have to be disaggregated for the national accounts, the treatment of depreciation which is properly deducted from company accounts but not from national accounts, and the treatment of interest and dividend flows which are different for national accounting purposes.

The book to which the hon. Gentleman referred lays out a plan—largely for inflation accounting, as I understand it—but accounting standards bodies have not been able to agree on such matters for the past 20 years and it is highly unlikely that it would be right or proper for the Government to attempt to impose a particular standard of accounting and reporting which they felt would be suitable for the many different purposes. That is not a practical proposition.

Dr. Bray: Has the Economic Secretary asked either the Financial Reporting Council or the Accounting Standards Committee for their attitude to increased legislation in this matter?

Mr. Maples: As I have said, accountants and accounting standards boards cannot agree. The United

[Mr. Maples]

Kingdom Accounting Standards Committee does not agree on all sorts of things. Its biggest difficulty was on inflation accounting. Company accounts should be clear and explain through their notes how they arrive at the figures presented. It is perfectly easy for any reasonably numerate person to interpret such accounts in a way which gives access to a good deal of information about a company. But to put the accounts of leasing and manufacturing companies, overseas traders and banks into some straitjacket which applies to all of them is impractical. The information will be taken quarterly. The foreign and United Kingdom profits will be disaggregated and we are asking for seven items of information, all of which will be made available.

I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for what he said about the burden of the collection of statistics. We have reduced by half the number of forms that businesses have to fill in—from 800,000 to 400,000. I regret that this order and the Chancellor's initiative will result in a few more, but we are confining it to the 1,500 largest companies and we expect to get from them the vast bulk of the information that we need because that is where most of the corporate profits are.

The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) made a lot of the Central Statistical Office not being independent and of politically massaged and managed statistics. I work a lot with officials of the CSO, they are a thoroughly professional group of people and what he said is pretty offensive to them. There are absolutely no grounds for saying it. The Royal Statistical Society's report said that it found absolutely no evidence of what the hon. and learned Gentleman suggests. If he suggests that the statistics are manipulated politically, he is completely wrong.

Mr. Carlile *rose*——

Mr. Maples: The hon. and learned Gentleman must let me finish. He made a serious allegation and I intend to convince him that he is completely wrong. There is absolutely no way in which Treasury or any other Ministers could interfere with statistics. We have no basis for doing so and we have no grounds on which to do so. They are collected by and analysed by professionals and the publications are put together by professionals.

The dates on which the vast majority of statistics are published are laid down well in advance. If any Treasury or other Minister instructed a delay, it would rapidly become apparent. It has never been the case. The hon. and learned Gentleman should be extremely careful about making allegations of that kind, which cannot be substantiated.

Mr. Carlile: The criticisms that I made were directed not at the professionalism of the statisticians but at the regime in which they are forced to operate. Moreover, is the Minister aware that every word that I said in the debate is supported by the representations of a working party composed of senior officials of the Royal Statistical Society? Why is the Minister not prepared to pay attention to that distinguished body's representations on these matters? I can show him documentary evidence of their support, if need be.

Mr. Maples: The Royal Statistical Society said tha found no evidence whatever that

"individual government statisticians operate to anything than the best professional standards".

Dr. Bray: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Maples: No, I should like to respond to that po The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery sugg that the statisticians allow themselves to be manipula by politicians like me.

Mr. Carlile: No.

Mr. Maples: It is what he suggests because the statis could be manipulated only by politicians such as my telling statisticians to do something other than what t would professionally want to do.

Mr. Carlile: I am grateful to the Minister for giving again. I do not wish to prolong the argument, but doe not appreciate that the regime is such that if Minis —I make no allegations against the Minister—wish manipulate the statistics, there is no guarantee of statisticians' independence? That is the complaint wh the Royal Statistical Society rightly makes. Why are Government not prepared to give the same guarante statisticians' independence as exists in most wes countries, as he well knows? Why can we not hav Statistics Act to guarantee their independence?

Mr. Maples: The hon. and learned Gentleman makes an entirely different allegation. He says that system is such that it is not clear that the statistical ser is independent. He said before that Ministers manipul statistics.

Mr. Carlile: No.

Mr. Maples: I am glad that the hon. and lea Gentleman is no longer making that allegation. I coming to the system.

Dr. Bray: If the Minister had read on from quotation that he gave, he would have read:

"but we are not satisfied that the organizational framewo which they"—

that is Government statisticians—

"work offers the best protection against undue pressure

Earlier in the report the society said:

"Integrity has not only to exist, but to be visible."

It says further:

"the lack of a standing mechanism within which governm statisticians can have a constructive dialogue with produ and users and meet criticism is itself a comment on the exi arrangements."

Ministers have frequently discontinued series of stati and surveys which they found politically embarras For instance, not only unemployment but the distribu of income and wealth have been scandalously treated Government who think that they do not matter.

Mr. Maples: We have certainly reduced the burde some statistics collecting——

Mr. Carlile: Ah!

Mr. Maples: —but there was a strong call for us t so. It is not necessary to continue to collect informatio product categories as we did previously. Articles published annually on the distribution of wealth. The recent one was published last week. Articles on distribution of income are also published annually. I

hon. and learned Gentleman suggests that the regime under which the Government statistical service is managed does not exclude any possibility of interference, that is different from his original allegation.

Mr. Carlile: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Maples: No, I shall not give way again. I have given way to the hon. and learned Gentleman a lot. He made two separate allegations——

Mr. Carlile: The Minister was not listening.

Mr. Maples: Of course I was listening.

We believe that it is not necessary to change the system. We do not want a centralised statistical service because it is right to collect many statistics in the Departments to which that information relates. That is the way in which it has been done for a long time under Governments of all persuasions.

One of the purposes of the collection of statistics on, for example, transport is to enable transport policy makers and Ministers to make decisions. The utility of that to the national accounts is obviously important. The business statistics office, the family expenditure survey and retail prices responsibilities were transferred to the Central Statistical Office, but it is not our intention to transfer any more. We do not think that a centralised service is the right way to proceed. It would be inefficient and expensive and it would not be as useful to Departments as the present system. *[Interruption.]* It is independent as it is. The collection, publication and analysis of the statistics are carried out by professionals. I have repeatedly said that to the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery.

The main, though not the only, purpose of the collection of the statistics is to help Government policy makers and forecasters. Everything that the statistical service collects is published as soon as it is ready. The delay in publication of the series in which most people are interested is between 24 and 48 hours after the information becomes available. There is no lengthy delay and the dates on which such series are to be published are set out well in advance. If there were any attempt to delay publication of the retail prices index or balance of payments figures, everyone would know. We do not think that it would be right for the Government to lose control of the process. The Government should be able to set the priorities and decide where resources will be allocated.

I was asked about independence. Many things would happen if a Minister attempted to interfere. The permanent secretary who is head of the Central Statistical Office has access to me, to the Chancellor and, at the end of the day, to the Prime Minister. There is no question but that in the long run remedies are available. As I have said, there is no way in which a Minister such as myself or the Chancellor could interfere in one of these series. What would one ask to be done? Could someone be asked to knock half a point off the retail prices index? That is simply not a practical proposition and there is no basis on which to do it. We do not have an alternative source of information on which we could or would seek to argue a separate case.

The points made by the Royal Statistical Society are misconceived. That is not the way we run our statistical service, nor is it the way we want to run it. Statistics are not produced for the statisticians in the Royal Statistical Society. They are produced mainly for the Government, to enable us to operate our policies. I am happy with things the way they are and with the way matters are organised. It is right that matters should stay as they are.

Dr. Bray *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): I take it that the hon. Gentleman has the leave of the House to speak again.

Dr. Bray: I did not refer in my speech to the report of the Royal Statistical Society, which was not directly germane to the debate, but I am glad that the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) referred to it. The Government's reply to that report and to technical questions about the development of statistics illustrated their incompetence in economic management and were quite appalling. The complacency with which they approach government and the needs of business lies close to the root of the Government's problems and the economic failures of the past two years. The House will have to return to these matters at greater length another time.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Statistics of Trade Act 1947 (Amendment of Schedule) Order 1990 be made in the form of the draft laid before this House on 7th November.

Sport (Funding)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Sackville.]*

10.48 pm

Mr. David Evans (Welwyn Hatfield): I welcome this opportunity to debate the funding of sport. I also welcome to the Dispatch Box my hon. Friend the Minister for Sport whose appointment earlier this year was inspired. I am sure that he would agree. I wish him every success in his new post. I also pay tribute to the former Minister for Sport who is now the Under-Secretary of State for Energy, my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, East (Mr. Moynihan). Sport in Britain benefited enormously from the energy and foresight that he brought to the job. At the Department of Energy he is known as the new Red Adair.

Although my remarks are directed principally at my hon. Friend the Minister for Sport, they are by no means exclusively directed at him. Sport transcends lines of class, race, sex, geography and physical ability. In government it is an issue that crosses departmental lines. Therefore, I hope that my remarks will be heeded by other Ministers in the Department of the Environment, especially those responsible for inner-city policy, and by those at the Home Office, the Department of Education and Science, the Department of Health, and, most of all, in the Treasury.

We cannot escape the fact that we face a number of serious and deeply rooted social problems. Various Government initiatives have been taken which I welcome, but I draw the Government's attention to some of the reasons why extra funding for sport would have a huge social benefit.

Law and order is obviously a major problem. One third of all crimes are carried out by young offenders under the age of 17. The vast majority of adults in our prisons were juvenile offenders. The number of crimes committed by those under the age of 10 is running at a staggering 6,000 a year. The peak age of offending is now 15 years.

The national health service is strained to the limit because of an increase in the number of patients for which it cares—30,000 extra per week compared with the relevant figures in 1979—especially those suffering from heart disease and other major ailments caused by being unfit.

When addressing such problems we tend to focus on the cure rather than prevention. Therefore, those who commit crime are sent to prison at a cost, which is borne by the taxpayer, of £250 per person per week. Our prisons are crowded, again at great expense to the taxpayer, and they afford little reward in terms of rehabilitation. People who suffer heart attacks are naturally cared for in hospital—often, depending upon the severity of the attack, in intensive care units. It is right that such care should take up considerable NHS resources and I accept that much of that expenditure is unavoidable. But much of it is avoidable. Surely it is vital to find the means of prevention rather than the cure. I want the Government to consider one means of prevention in particular. It is not the complete answer to the nation's health and social problems, but it could make a significant contribution to alleviating crime, particularly petty crime which most youngsters commit, and serious bad health. I refer, of course, to sport.

Organised and unorganised sporting activity absorbs the energies and, equally important, the enthusiasm of those participating. Sport is socially and physically healthy. Much crime is the product not of deliberate evil, but of boredom and peer pressure. Youngsters need to be offered activities to absorb their energies and families and schools can do much in that respect.

Can the general community encourage young people to engage in sports? It can, but encouragement is not enough. We must ensure that the facilities exist to make such activity possible. I do not believe that the Government have taken on board the fact that in every family someone is interested in one sport or another. After all, we are a sporting nation and we unite easily when we have a national champion to support. During the World cup we united to support a team of which we could be proud.

According to the latest Home Office news release—we are supposed to be proud of this—the Home Office is able to provide for a further increase in police establishments of 700 officers, together with 1,300 additional civilian staff. That means that in 1991-92 office establishments are expected to reach nearly 128,200, which represents an increase of 15,500, 14 per cent. over the last 11 years. Yet the crime figures are at an all-time high, which is an embarrassment not only to the Government but to the nation as a whole.

As I said, one third of the crimes are carried out by young offenders. I believe that we should tackle the problem by directing more resources towards schools, thus enabling sports teachers to help us to help the "latchkey youngster". When I was at school, my sports master and his colleagues would stay behind after 3.30 and organise all kinds of games. Netball, football, hockey, cricket, athletics—you name it, they organised it, voluntarily and willingly. Nowadays, however, we live in a different society with different principles, and sports teachers should be rewarded for taking part in sporting activities after school.

I believe that over the next few years the crime figures would drop dramatically if we concentrated our expenditure on that third of offenders who are under 17. It would establish a much better society in years to come.

Mr. John Carlisle (Luton, North): All hon. Members will agree with what my hon. Friend has said so far. But is not there a wealth of talent among youngsters and teaching staff in schools, and would not such people be keen to perform the very tasks of which my hon. Friend spoke with—regrettably—some nostalgia? Does my hon. Friend agree that what they need is encouragement, not only from the Government but from local authorities? It is a fact that many Labour authorities have actively discouraged team sports, thus discouraging teachers from taking part in worth while activities to the benefit of their pupils.

Mr. Evans: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Local authorities seem almost hell-bent on preventing any development in sporting activities, especially when planning applications are involved. I agree with every word that he said.

We have tried spending money on heavy policing, which—let us face it—does not work: the figures prove it. There must be another answer. What we need is not only a campaign to encourage youngsters and adults to take up sports; as a community, we must ensure that the means exist for everyone to participate in organised sport.

How are we to do that? A recent report by the Audit Commission revealed that sports centres provided by local authorities tend to be used predominantly by the middle

class. That may be because they are more knowledgeable about the need to exercise, because they are more likely to be car owners or because the centres are too expensive; the fact remains that ordinary people do not use them. We must provide facilities for the vast majority of the population; it is not acceptable for only middle-class people to be involved in sports centres.

The answer may lie primarily—although not exclusively—with the schools, for three reasons. First, schools already have sports facilities; it is therefore a case of developing what already exists. Secondly, most people—especially in urban areas—live within walking distance of a school. Thirdly, it is at school that most people begin to participate in organised sport, and they will therefore be familiar with the facilities provided. For an adult, returning to use the facilities of one's own school will not present problems of going to the unknown, possibly distant, certainly expensive sports centres that may be provided.

A report published earlier this month by the Secondary Heads Association emphasised the problem faced by schools in the provision of sport and physical education. By channelling more resources into schools to provide sport and PE, one benefits the schools and the community generally. Ensuring that schools have good sports facilities is obviously good for pupils, but allowing the facilities to be more widely available benefits everybody. It is one of the most cost-effective and socially beneficial ways of proceeding. It will help schools in another respect. By hiring out their facilities for a modest fee, they will gain a much-needed source of income.

Schools require improved resources, which can be provided in part by Government, but should ideally be provided in partnership with local industry, local authorities and local benefactors. At present, most of the financial assistance provided by Government for sport in this country is in the form of grants to the Sports Council, which does much fine work. It assists many sports directly —no less than 66, according to its latest annual report.

As well as addressing such vital issues as the threatened loss of playing fields, the Sports Council has an established infrastructure and a strong regional arm and is best placed to liaise with local authorities and sporting organisations on the provision of sporting facilities. There is no better mechanism for using and distributing Government funds. Therefore, the question is: is the level of support sufficient? I do not believe that it is.

My hon. Friend the Minister announced last week that he was to increase the council's grant in aid for 1991-92 by nearly £3 million over this year's grant. That is to be welcomed, particularly when public expenditure is under tight control. But it still brings the total assistance to only just over £46·5 million, which is not generous. In terms of public expenditure, it is a joke. That sum could be substantially increased if my hon. Friend would consider a scheme whereby every pound donated to the Sports Council by industry were matched by a pound from Government, up to a maximum of £250 million of Government money. That would give the Sports Council £250 million from industry and £250 million from Government which, together with the sum already granted, would provide sufficient resources to make a major impact on our social problems and, in the long run, on crime carried out by young people.

Even if my hon. Friend is not convinced by those arguments, I hope that a hard-headed business reason may convince him because I know that he is a keen business man. Sport in this country generates about 400,000 jobs. It contributes to tourism earnings and pays £3 billion to the Treasury every year in tax returns. Therefore, the case for greater spending is as practical as it is socially beneficial. It is simple: the more one spends, the more one gets.

So far, I have put the case for an increase in public expenditure. I realise that that may come as a big surprise to my hon. Friend, as it runs contrary to Government policy and my own stated views. But what I seek is a comparatively modest investment, a long-term investment from which individuals, communities, the Government and ultimately society will benefit. But it is not just an increase in spending that I seek. The Government could also help by removing some of the obstacles that stand in the way of greater private sector involvement in sport.

There is no time this evening to go into, in detail, the various proposals being put forward. My hon. Friend is already aware of some of the organisations advocating them, including the Institute of Sports Sponsorship and Business in Sport. I should like, however, to refer to two which deserve serious consideration and which, if implemented, could have a major impact on the provision of sports facilities.

The first is exemption for qualifying sports organisations from corporation tax on income and gains. There is a case for sporting bodies being treated differently from their commercial counterparts. This measure would help to free funds for the development of sport at all levels, from the grass roots to national teams. For instance, the British Olympic Association would benefit by £750,000 every four years, and that would enable us to compete with other nations on a much more level playing field.

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): In 1993 the Isle of Wight will be hosting the fifth international inter-island games which will attract competitors such as Iceland, the Faeroes, the Falklands, the Orkneys, Greenland and, of course, a team from the Isle of Wight. With 3,000 competitors coming to the island we greatly need an all-weather tartan track. My hon. Friend's point to the Minister deserves serious consideration, not just for the Olympics but for the inter-island games on the Isle of Wight.

Mr. Evans: My hon. Friend is better known as the Foreign Secretary and Prime Minister of the Isle of Wight, and I agree with every word that he said.

The second relief would take the form of capital allowances on the construction of buildings housing sporting facilities. Such relief is available now only for facilities that are an integral part of hotel complexes or that form part of industrial buildings. That is an anomaly and it should be removed. There is a further case for providing a special incentive for facilities that are to be located in decaying and inner city areas.

These two measures, which would help to induce greater private investment in sport, would send out the right signals that the Government take sport seriously. I urge the Minister to consider them and I shall listen carefully to his reply to hear what hope it holds out.

11.7 pm

The Minister for Sport (Mr. Robert Atkins): This is an auspicious occasion for me, in that I can discuss the matter for which I have ministerial responsibility—sport. I am

[The Minister for Sport]

grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Evans), who has done more for sport than almost any other hon. Member. That is well known inside and outside the House.

I am delighted that my two old friends the hon. Members for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field) and for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle) are here, since I know that their interest in sport is as great as mine. I also notice that my esteemed and distinguished predecessor, my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro), has stayed up to participate in the debate. He performed with distinction the job that I now have. I also record the presence of my hon. Friend the Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton) in his capacity as assistant Whip.

My hon. Friend the Member for Welwyn Hatfield raised a number of interesting points, and I am tempted to throw away my prepared speech and answer them in detail. He and I are equally interested in two areas particularly. The first is the financial structure of sport. Because he and I share a friendship with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, he will know that our right hon. Friend has already done a great deal to show his commitment to the funding of sport, and not only in an increase in the Sports Council's grant for this year. That increase, although small, is an achievement by the Government during a time of difficult financial restraints.

My hon. Friend knows that matters of taxation are the responsibility of the Chancellor.

My hon. Friend was also kind enough to say that since I have been in this job I have asked for contributions from various sporting bodies, including the Sports Aid Foundation, the Central Council of Physical Recreation, the Sports Council and Business in Sport. I have asked them to send to me recommendations that they believe are pertinent to the financial structure of sport, particularly taxation. I think that my hon. Friend knows that I am extremely sympathetic, but this is a matter for the Chancellor of the Exchequer. It is only he who can make those decisions.

However, past evidence suggests, particularly in relation to my right hon. Friend's commitment to reduce the pool betting duty from 42·5 per cent. to 40 per cent. —thereby providing £100 million over the next five years for the reconstruction, renovation and improvement of football grounds—just where his heart lies. I hope that my hon. Friend's contribution, in addition to those that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is to make, will have some effect.

My hon. Friend also referred to sport in schools. I have much sympathy for what he said. The matters that he raised are, for the most part, for the Department of Education and Science. He will, I know, be as delighted as I that the new Secretary of State, in whose constituency lies Trent Bridge and Nottingham Forest football ground, understands sport. The father of my hon. Friend the Member for Enfield, North (Mr. Eggar), who has ministerial responsibility for schools, played first-class cricket. My hon. Friend also appreciates the importance of these matters. Any overtures that my hon. Friends and I make will at least be well received and well understood, even though it may not be possible immediately to implement all the decisions that we wish to be made.

School sport is arguably the most important are has to be developed. As the parent of children aged 11, I see at first hand their sporting activities. Mor through our constituency interests, my hon. Friends know about the involvement of youngsters in sport. I took on this job, my prime objective has been whatever I can to develop and improve sporting fa for young people, including those who are disabled. can contribute a great deal to their lon development, enjoyment of life and good Moreover, as my hon. Friend said, sport keeps th the streets and away from crime.

Anything that can be done to bring pressure to b local authorities must be encouraged. My hon. Frie Member for Luton, North made a particularly sign point about the attitude of some local authorities. years ago, I had the privilege to be a London boro Haringey councillor. It is regrettable that, in recent Haringey has decided not to encourage competitive I was told only the other day by a correspondent wrote to me from Haringey that the council no allows sports days in some of its schools. They activities days instead. No one has to compete anyone else, and everyone gets points.

Mr. Barry Field: Does everybody get a cup?

Mr. Atkins: Probably.

The points made about sport in schools ar important. The activities that will follow as a result management of schools will have a salutary effect attitudes. Many local people, because of their pare local community interests, will want schools to do sport. I suspect that that may be a radical improv

My hon. Friend was absolutely right to refer to teachers who, after the school day is over, take you into the nets, on to the rugby or soccer field or on athletics track or tennis court. Because of their int sport, they are prepared to give up their own time to youngsters and see them through at least to the side, or even to a county or national side. I thank al teachers who do so much to support and enc youngsters.

My hon. Friend touched generally on another m which I wish to refer. I have set myself another ob at the very least to maintain, and, arguably, to devel improve, standards of sportsmanship. We have in many sports—rugby, cricket, soccer, skiing——

Mr. John Carlisle: Fives.

Mr. Atkins: —fives, and many others. America the expression, "It isn't cricket," without knowin the game is, but they know precisely what the exp means. The standards of sportsmanship in this c while always in need of improvement, are pretty g

I was disturbed, however, when I attended a F League meeting in my constituency, where I was to Lancashire football association, which is responsi amateur soccer in the county, last year imposed about £84,000. That is a stunning figure. It rep about 8,000 bookings, 3,000 sendings off and 17 on referees, one of which resulted in hospitalisatio is amateur sport. The next item on the agenda meeting was where to get more referees from.

That problem encapsulates our difficulties in spo not pick on soccer, which is at the forefront, becaus

a high regard for our national winter game. It has achieved much. Gary Lineker and the England team and, if I may say so in the presence of my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries, the Scottish team in the World cup contributed much to the improvement and understanding of sportsmanship, and we must build on that.

I hope that hon. Members will support me, the Sports Council and the CCPR in our attempts to improve the standards of sportsmanship so that youngsters, to whom we have dedicated much of our discussion, have heroes to emulate such as Bill Beaumont, Tom Finney, Nick Faldo and Gary Lineker, who are ambassadors for their sport and who provide an example that we should all follow. The administrators must encourage such people. The recent brawl between Manchester United and Arsenal is not the image that we want our youngsters to see. Anything that hon. Members and the administrators of our games can do to demonstrate the importance of sportsmanship will achieve much.

I am delighted to have replied to the debate without referring to my notes more than once. My hon. Friend the Member for Welwyn Hatfield has raised a topic of much importance, which is dear to his heart. I am delighted to be doing this job with the support and encouragement of my hon. Friends.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at seventeen minutes past Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 22 November 1990

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

BRITISH RAILWAYS (NO. 2) BILL *(By Order)*
Order for consideration, as amended, read.
To be considered on Thursday 29 November.

HEATHROW EXPRESS RAILWAY BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*
Order for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time on Thursday 29 November.

Oral Answers to Questions

NORTHERN IRELAND

Anglo-Irish Agreement

1. **Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he will be meeting the Irish Prime Minister to discuss the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Peter Brooke): I expect to meet Mr. Haughey shortly.

Mrs. Mahon: Will the Secretary of State confirm to the Irish Prime Minister that whoever is successful in the forthcoming election of the Prime Minister of this country will support the Anglo-Irish Agreement? Does he agree that it is a good thing for Britain that a Prime Minister who has thrived on conflict has gone and that that gives hope for future peace in not only Ireland but the Gulf?

Mr. Brooke: On the basis of my previous conversations with the Taoiseach, I have no doubt that we shall discuss, among other things, the political situation in the United Kingdom. The British Government signed the Anglo-Irish Agreement and will continue it. I entirely repudiate the hon. Lady's latter remark.

Mr. Peter Robinson: Will the Secretary of State tell the House whether in previous meetings Mr. Haughey raised the cause of the UDR Four? Or has he raised only the so-called injustice in the Birmingham and Guildford cases? If Mr. Haughey raised the case of the UDR Four, did he ask for any details about the delay in announcing the results of the ESDA—electrostatic data analysis—tests? If Mr. Haughey has not asked about it, will the Secretary of State tell the House what the delay is?

Mr. Brooke: I do not recall discussing any of the matters that the hon. Gentleman mentioned with Mr. Haughey, so he has not asked me the questions that the hon. Gentleman asked. The hon. Gentleman takes his supplementary question a little wide of the original question.

Mr. John D. Taylor: As both the Prime Ministers who initiated the Anglo-Irish Agreement will soon be out of office, as most people throughout Northern Ireland remain opposed to the agreement, and as the agreement has maintained a political stalemate in Northern Ireland, would not the Secretary of State do better to concentrate on talking to the political parties in Northern Ireland rather than negotiating with Dublin? Last week the Dublin Minister for Foreign Affairs revealed that the Anglo-Irish Agreement is not operating and that he was not consulted before the presentation of the emergency provisions legislation.

Mr. Brooke: As to the right hon. Gentleman's suggestion that we should proceed without the Irish Government, it would be necessary to establish whether others would be content with the restricted agenda that would apply. On his question about the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the emergency provisions Bill, we had an opportunity to discuss it in advance of the Bill's introduction.

Mr. Stanbrook: Will my right hon. Friend tell the Prime Minister of the Irish Republic that if he wants to help to promote peace, stability and reconciliation in Northern Ireland, he should take steps to remove from the constitution of the Irish Republic the constitutional claim over Northern Ireland and, therefore, United Kingdom territory?

Mr. Brooke: My views on articles 2 and 3 of the Irish constitution are already on record in the House, but the provisions of the constitution make no difference to the fact that in United Kingdom domestic law and in international law Northern Ireland is part of the United Kingdom. Successive Irish Governments have acknowledged the words of article 1 of the agreement that any change in the status of Northern Ireland would come about only with the consent of a majority of the people of Northern Ireland.

Mr. McNamara: Is the Secretary of State aware that although there are many areas where we in the Labour party have opposed the Government's policy on Northern Ireland over the past 11 years, we recognise the importance of the present Prime Minister's brave efforts in seeking to resolve some of the problems of Northern Ireland by signing and upholding the Anglo-Irish Agreement, and that that is to her credit? Will he assure us that he and Mr. Haughey will be determined to impress on all the parties to the negotiations the urgent necessity of serious political talks?

Mr. Brooke: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for what he said about my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and her contribution to the affairs of Northern Ireland during her most distinguished premiership. I do not know exactly how wide my conversations with Mr. Haughey will range, but we and the Irish Government remain united in our desire to see talks move forward.

Mr. Hunter: Since the Anglo-Irish Agreement has not brought peace, stability or reconciliation to Northern Ireland, would not it be better for my right hon. Friend to

devote his energies to establishing a meaningful dialogue with the mainstream of Northern Ireland politics, the Ulster Unionists, who are our natural allies?

Mr. Brooke: I speak for myself and for the Government as a whole when I say that a benefit of the conversations that we have had in the past year has been the widening ripple of dialogue and I hope that that will continue into 1992.

Castle Court, Belfast

2. **Mr. Harry Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he has received any representations from traders and shopkeepers in the Castle Court area of west Belfast for compensation for lost trade and disruption due to current redevelopments; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Richard Needham): Representations have been received, but there is no provision for owners of property adjacent to private developments to receive such compensation.

Mr. Barnes: As you know, Mr. Speaker, I am not the Member for Belfast, West and this is a constituency case which I took up only because the elected representative refuses to take his seat in Parliament, which he should do, especially to deal with cases such as this. The Castle Court development has led to problems for shopkeepers in the area who have suffered considerable damage, loss and near-bankruptcy and who face prosecution for accidents that occur outside their shops. If the Minister can sort out the Prime Minister, why cannot he sort out this problem?

Mr. Needham: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for raising the issue. As he knows, both rates and rents were reduced by one third. The fact is that Castle Court is now up and running and proving to be a real success is bringing tens of thousands of people to the city centre. The best way to increase trade for the Belfast traders is to get the terrorists out.

Rev. Martin Smyth: Although I am aware of the positive points to which the Minister referred, and that shopkeepers and traders can have some compensation, is not it a fact that those who have looked for employment in the Castle Court complex have been told that it is only for people from north and west Belfast? Is not it a tragedy that people who have been forced out of north and west Belfast cannot get employment at Castle Court?

Mr. Needham: That just is not true. Thousands of people are employed in Castle Court by a large number of retailers. Anybody who wants work there will be treated under the fair employment legislation which exists throughout the Province.

Community Groups

4. **Mr. Parry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on his Department's policy on vetting of community groups.

10. **Mr. Corbett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on vetting of community groups by his Department.

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland (Mr. John Cope): The policy remains as set out on by my right hon. Friend the then Secretary

Mr. Parry: Will the Minister set up a pro appeals so that groups that have their fundi can defend themselves against specific accu than be subject to anonymous and unspec tions? Is the Minister aware that many Province are dissatisfied with the present p

Mr. Cope: Further representations can often are, on individual cases. We keep them

Mr. Corbett: If the Minister was right in remove funding from Glor na Gael, why Ulster Constabulary permit it to carry collection in Belfast at almost the same time again about some form of appeal system so Government decide either to withdraw funding from such organisations at least t accusations against them and have a chanc on them?

Mr. Cope: The case concerning the con west Belfast organisation mentioned Gentleman is now before the courts and improper for me to comment.

Rev. Ian Paisley: Will the right hon. Gen the House that he will continue to look c community grants and that he will ensure t is given to any that have links with terrorist

Mr. Cope: That is what we seek to do policy sets out.

Mr. Molyneaux: Is not there a need for control of grants to community bodies of that there is reason to believe that much o siphoned off by paramilitary organisations?

Mr. Cope: The control is as strict as we ca if the right hon. Gentleman has specific information about particular grants, of c always willing to listen.

Mr. Hume: Will the Minister join me in new-found interest in the Province of No represented by the attendance here today?

Does the Minister agree that, if we face is the Government's policy to promote th and development of cultural diversity in No Does he agree that the Glor na Gael orga outstanding work to protect and prom language? Does he also agree that Conwa Belfast provides community-based jobs? D agree that it is impossible for any con organisation in Northern Ireland not t members who are supporters of paramili tions, but that that does not mean that the f them? Does he agree that one cannot go Northern Ireland without the presence o who support paramilitary organisations, but not make the churches subversive organisa

Mr. Cope: On the first part of the questi the interest in Northern Ireland affairs; we

The main part of the hon. Gentlem emphasises the difficulties that we face whe

decisions—which we recognise. Each decision is reached independently and, although it is extremely difficult, we do our best to take it judged on the best information we have.

Mr. Stott: In view of the widespread concern about the arbitary use of power associated with the removal of funding from community groups, the use of section 42 of the Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Act 1976 and the widespread belief that decisions are sometimes based on mistaken information—a concern which has emerged today in the Northern Ireland press—will the Minister take action to ensure that the security advice on which he acts is accurate?

Mr. Cope: We do our best to ensure that all the advice we receive on that and on other matters is accurate. It is not easy to make such difficult decisions. I have seen the accusations that appeared this morning in some newspapers in Northern Ireland, but those newspapers are wrong to suggest that this is some sort of blanket affair. The decisions are reached on individual cases and the Secretary of State in particular takes great care to ensure not only that the information is accurate but that public money does not benefit paramilitary groups.

Local Government

5. **Sir Hal Miller:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what progress is being made towards devolving local government in Ulster.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Dr. Brian Mawhinney): The Government have no present plans for giving more powers to local authorities in Northern Ireland, but would not rule out any workable proposal here, provided that such a proposal guaranteed fair and equitable treatment for everyone in the local authority area and seemed likely to receive widespread acceptance.

Sir Hal Miller: If we are having difficulties with the Anglo-Irish Agreement or its successor, should not we make a much more determined effort at local level?

Dr. Mawhinney: We are not having difficulties with the Anglo-Irish Agreement—*[Interruption.]* I pay tribute to the determination of my right hon. Friend to bring all the political parties together round the table. He has made considerable progress in that regard, although deep difficulties remain. But my hon. Friend should be in no doubt that when we say that we are determined to seek ways to give locally elected representatives a greater say in the decisions that affect the lives of their constituents, we mean it.

Mr. Clifford Forsythe: Does the Minister agree that councillors should have more input into road and planning decisions in their areas? Is he aware that if councillors had that greater input, it might stop planners allowing industrial estates to be built, for example, on top of hills in the middle of areas of special control? Is he further aware that it might even persuade the public to accept that it is not true that if one has money, one can build wherever and whatever one likes and then take the matter to court and fight it, but that someone who has no money will face the full majesty of the law that is ranged against him?

Dr. Mawhinney: The hon. Gentleman knows that I have started an undertaking to meet local authorities in Northern Ireland to hear their views, as ha Under-Secretary of State, my hon. Friend the Memb Wiltshire, North (Mr. Needham). We listen to what l elected representatives tell us and I refer the Gentleman to earlier remarks that I made on the iss necessary precondition for the return of greater pow local authorities would be a system of ensuring fai equitable treatment to everyone in all local aut areas.

Rev. William McCrea: Will the Minister annou the House and the people of Northern Ireland wh Government intend to bring to an end the despicabl disgraceful situation in which Sinn Fein mouthpiec terrorists are allowed to sit as elected representati councils in Northern Ireland?

Dr. Mawhinney: The hon. Gentleman knows th have already taken steps in that matter. Although I some sympathy with his position, the issue goes wider than the question.

Mr. Jim Marshall: Does the Minister agree tinkering with local government powers in the Pro offers no long-term solution to the problems there? he further agree that the only way forward is to agreed political structures for the Province as a wh

Dr. Mawhinney: The hon. Gentleman knows th have been seeking with great dedication—again, tribute to my right hon. Friend—ways to put in place sort of structures. I suspect that the hon. Gentleman a that it is vital for locally elected representatives to h greater say in the decisions that govern the lives of electors. That principle will have to guide us in the ahead, not least if we are unable to overcom difficulties that presently confront us.

Food Safety

6. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Secretary of Stat Northern Ireland when he intends to introduce the Safety (Northern Ireland) Order; and if he will m statement.

Mr. Needham: Consultation on the proposal fo draft Food Safety (Northern Ireland) Order completed on 31 October. Arrangements are now made for the draft order to be laid before Parliament in 1991.

Mr. Colvin: As my hon. Friend will be aware, that requires, among other things, the compulsory traini staff handling food. Is he aware that that require could bear heavily on pubs, restaurants and hotels there is a high turnover of staff? Will the Governme giving help towards the cost of that training, beari mind the fact that those places, in which people can and socialise on a totally non-sectarian basis, shou encouraged rather than overburdened with unnece bureaucratic rules?

When the Minister gets back to Belfast, will h visiting a local pub and drinking a toast to Brit longest-serving and most successful Prime Minister?

Mr. Needham: I agree with my hon. Friend that it great importance to make sure that more people pubs and fewer go to the wrong sort of clubs. It about six hours for a person to be trained to reac

standard of the hygiene certificate that is required. It is not expensive and I hope that all employers, pubs and hotels already undertake proper hygiene training, anyway.

Mr. Maginnis: Is not the Minister seized of the urgency of the need to deal with the unfit meat trade, in which meat from fallen and diseased animals is still regularly entering the human food chain? Will he commit more resources and give better powers to local government to deal with the unscrupulous traders who sell meat unfit for human consumption?

Mr. Needham: As the hon. Gentleman knows, the Government are to make available extra funds to environmental health officers—*[Interruption.]* I shall, of course, pass the hon. Gentleman's comments to my noble Friend Lord Skelmersdale, who is responsible for the relevant legislation.

Mr. Speaker: Order. May I ask hon. Members below the Gangway to desist from holding private conversations? The trouble is that I can hear snatches of those conversations, which on some occasions are quite interesting and amusing, but not today.

Farm Subsidies

8. **Mr. McGrady:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what special financial assistance the Government will allocate to the agricultural industry in Northern Ireland, in the light of the general agreement on tariffs and trade negotiations and the Council of Ministers' proposed reductions in farm subsidies.

Mr. Brooke: Any assistance to the agricultural industry will be a matter for consideration by the Council of Ministers in light of the result of the GATT negotiations.

Mr. McGrady: Does the Secretary of State agree that farmers in Northern Ireland are now facing the worst potential financial crisis since the agricultural depression that occurred between the two world wars? In that context, I found his answer disappointing. Will the right hon. Gentleman join me in condemning the decision to withdraw grants from co-operatives in Northern Ireland which market beef, sheep, cereals and potatoes because Northern Ireland is an objective 1 area in the EEC and we shall remain in competition with other objective 1 areas which will receive those grants? Will the Secretary of State condemn that decision?

Mr. Brooke: I share the hon. Gentleman's concern about farming in Northern Ireland because of the circumstances confronting its farmers in the current year. I shall draw the hon. Gentleman's proposition to the attention of my noble Friend Lord Skelmersdale, who is responsible for agriculture in the Province, and will discuss it with him.

Mr. Latham: Is it my right hon. Friend's position, not only for Northern Ireland but for the whole of the United Kingdom, that the GATT agreement can be accepted by the British Government as part of the EEC position only if it represents a satisfactory deal for our farming industry and, incidentally, for the textile industry, which is also important in Northern Ireland?

Mr. Brooke: I wholly agree with my hon. Friend, not only about our attitude towards the negotiations conducted within the Community framework, but about the extreme importance of the Uruguay round.

Mr. William Ross: Did not the Commissioner, Mr. MacSharry, say when the 30 per cent. cut in the subsidy was announced that no farmer would be worse off? How on earth can the Commission and Her Majesty's Government live up to that commitment? The people of Northern Ireland, and especially those in the farming community, are most anxious to hear what extra money is to be made available.

Mr. Brooke: I am conscious that statements were made in the aftermath of the Agriculture Council, which agreed on the Community's negotiating position in the GATT round. We must wait until that GATT round is concluded before deciding precisely what we can do, especially in relation to farmers.

Rev. Ian Paisley: In view of the Secretary of State's answer to the hon. Member for South Down (Mr. McGrady) and his affirmation that he understands the seriousness of the position of farmers in Northern Ireland, will he outline the proposals that he has suggested to the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food should be put before the Council of Ministers so that this financial difficulty can be alleviated?

Mr. Brooke: No proposals have yet been made about how farmers might be compensated. In the negotiations, the United Kingdom argued—and it was agreed—that detailed decisions would be premature. The possibilities include production neutral income aid to the most vulnerable producers and measures with environmental or conservation objectives. I very much enjoyed the opportunity of meeting farmers from the glens of Antrim earlier this month when we discussed this matter.

Mr. Cryer: May I assure you, Mr. Speaker, of my support in trying to keep some of these noisy people subdued? Their behaviour is quite disgraceful.

Will the Minister assure the House that textiles will not be used as a bargaining counter in respect of agriculture in the GATT negotiations, because not only would that damage Northern Ireland, where textiles still provide some jobs, but, as the Minister recognises, it would damage the textile and clothing industry of the United Kingdom which employs 500,000 people in all and is an important source of jobs in cities such as Bradford which I help to represent?

Mr. Brooke: I am, of course, familiar with the importance of the textile industry to Northern Ireland, but overall responsibility for the GATT negotiations lies with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. The matter is not specifically related to this question about Northern Ireland farmers.

Doctors, Bangor

9. **Mr. Kilfedder:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give doctors in the Bangor health clinic the right of referral of patients to Bangor hospital.

Mr. Needham: The arrangements for the admission and care of patients in Bangor hospital are, as with all other hospitals in the board's area, under the control of

individual hospital consultants. GPs from throughout the area have the right to refer patients to any consultant via out-patients, domiciliary visit or direct contact.

Mr. Kilfedder: Is the Minister aware that all the doctors share my view that the length of time that patients have to wait for hospital appointments is scandalous in the Bangor area, which has an enormous and increasing population? Is not it equally disgraceful that there is no casualty department in the Bangor hospital and that 18 surgical beds are to be closed? *[Interruption.]* I regret to say that the Official Unionists are making a mockery of this question.

Mr. Needham: The consultants, who are, after all, the people most concerned with referrals to the hospital, are in favour of the temporary closure of the ward. It was very underused and there was no acute care in the hospital after 5 pm. I can assure the hon. Gentleman that health care in his area is of the highest order—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I ask the House to listen to Northern Ireland questions. This is a rare opportunity to ask questions about the Province.

I am grateful to the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) for his help. He might help me even more if he came and sat up here.

Political Parties (Discussions)

11. **Mr. Andrew MacKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on his discussions with political parties in the Province during the last month.

Mr. Brooke: Since the summer recess, I have had a number of meetings with the leaders of the main constitutional political parties in Northern Ireland and the Foreign Minister of the Republic of Ireland. All have expressed support for the view that formal talks should be launched soon which would address all relevant dimensions to the political problems of Northern Ireland, including the prospects for transferring substantial power, authority and responsibility to locally elected representatives in Northern Ireland on a widely acceptable basis.

Mr. MacKay: Does my right hon. Friend agree that even though those talks might not reach a positive conclusion, the fact that they have been going on for so long offers the first positive hope to come out of the Province, in political terms, for a long time?

Mr. Brooke: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's comment. I hope that his view is shared by Members of Parliament from the other constitutional parties in the Province. I certainly found the dialogue extremely fruitful.

Sir Russell Johnston: Will the Secretary of State advise his Cabinet colleague the Secretary of State for Scotland to follow his example in respect of consulting other political parties about devolution?

Mr. Brooke: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and I are agreed that different constitutional arrangements may be needed for different parts of the kingdom. It is important that appropriate arrangements be available for those parts.

Mr. Mallon: Will the Secretary of State confirm that during his discussions with the Northern Ireland parties and with the Government of the Republic of Ireland there is genuine concern to ensure that we make political progress? During those discussions, did he see any traces of the terminal disease called creeping integration?

Mr. Brooke: The fact that the talks have been going on for a long time has proved an opportunity for almost every subject to be discussed. I dare say that the subject mentioned by the hon. Gentleman has been raised at some stage during the past 10 months.

Mr. McNamara: In his speech in the Low Countries the Secretary of State identified a number of areas where the main difficulties now arise. Does he now feel that he will be able to make positive progress in those two areas?

Mr. Brooke: It may well become necessary to pause and take stock, but we have not yet reached that point. As I have indicated elsewhere, I currently await a response from the Irish Government to certain proposals that I have put to them. Thereafter, I would expect to have a further round with the Northern Ireland parties. I continue to find constructive my experience with all my interlocutors.

Irish Republic (Political Progress)

12. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on recent discussions over political progress he has had with the authorities in the Republic.

Mr. Brooke: My discussions with the Irish Government have produced a significant measure of agreement on a basis for talks which would address the various relationships relevant to the political situation in Northern Ireland. The Irish Government are, at present, considering proposals which I put forward at the last intergovernmental conference for resolving the main outstanding issues.

Mr. Winnick: Does the Secretary of State agree that it is absolutely essential to have the closest possible co-operation between the Irish Republic and this country?

Mr. Brooke: Over almost 16 months I have obtained great value from the discussions that I have had with the Irish Government through the Anglo-Irish Agreement. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I again appeal to the House and reiterate that these are important questions and it is a rare opportunity to put questions to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Rev. Ian Paisley: Will the Secretary of State inform the House whether it is still the Government's policy of the Government to consider an alternative to and a replacement of the Anglo-Irish Agreement?

Mr. Brooke: I am delighted to confirm to the hon. Gentleman the words that I have used to reply to him on previous occasions when he quite rightly made sure that I repeated myself accurately each time.

Local Health Committees

13. **Rev. Martin Smyth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make it his policy to maintain local health committees in the reorganisation of the national health service.

Mr. Needham: It remains our policy to secure effective local advice.

Rev. Martin Smyth: Will the Minister ensure that that effective local advice will be to retain the 16 local committees rather than reducing them to four area councils, bearing in mind that the Welsh Office gave that pattern to Wales?

Mr. Needham: I will, of course, pass on the hon. Gentleman's views to my noble Friend the Under-Secretary of State, Lord Skelmersdale. All I can say is that I think that four councils will do a much better job than the 16 district committees which were fragmented and powerless under the existing system.

Motorways

14. **Mr. Stern:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many miles of motorway are to be built in the next 10 years in the Province.

Mr. Needham: Approximately 2 km.

Mr. Stern: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that reply. Does he agree that the additional communications resulting from motorway construction are frequently an aid to keeping down terrorism? Will he look at his programme in that light?

Mr. Needham: We shall look at the programme in the light of what is the best road system for Northern Ireland. We have a good system, but it is getting fairly elderly and will need to be looked at again to see whether funds can be found to uprate it.

Mr. Beggs: Yet another of my constituents has died as a result of an accident on the Larne-Belfast road. Will the Minister assure me that he recognises the importance of Larne harbour to the Northern Ireland economy, to those passengers who use that port for access to the mainland, and will he ensure that the Larne-Belfast route— *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is very unseemly indeed.

Mr. Beggs: Can the Minister give us an assurance that the Larne-Belfast route will have the highest priority and motorway status? At the risk of getting a bullish answer, may I ask the Minister to tell us whether he has had any feelings of remorse for the remarks attributed to him regarding the Prime Minister, in view of her dignified resignation?

Mr. Needham: The hon. Gentleman is as aware of the importance of the Larne road as I am. If funds become available, we shall look at upgrading it. As to his second point, I am astonished that the hon. Gentleman should make use of a private call that was tapped by terrorists to make such a complaint.

Security

15. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what discussions he has had with his counterpart in the Republic of Ireland about the security situation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: Matters relating to the security situation are regularly discussed within the forum of the Anglo-Irish intergovernmental conference. The last meeting of the conference took place on 25 October 1990.

Mr. Thurnham: Will my right hon. Friend bring the maximum pressure to bear on his counterparts in southern Ireland to ensure that the maximum possible efforts are made to control security in all parts of the United Kingdom?

Mr. Brooke: What my hon. Friend refers to is a standard part of our agenda whenever the conference meets. *[Interruption.]*

Dr. Kim Howells: Is the Secretary of State aware that in that brief intercepted phone call to his wife, the Under-Secretary of State was speaking on behalf of a large number of his colleagues——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That has nothing to do with the previous question.

Right to Silence

17. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about the removal of the right to silence.

Mr. Cope: The right of silence has not been removed in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Bennett: I am sure that the Minister will agree that the use of the right to silence is not always an admission of guilt, as has been suggested. Is he aware that many of his hon. Friends did not want to declare how they voted during the week and that that was not necessarily an admission of guilt on their part? Will he ensure that the right to silence is not withdrawn in criminal proceedings in Northern Ireland?

Mr. Cope: All that we have done is to make sure that inferences can be drawn from silence in certain circumstances. That is as far as we have gone.

Security

18. **Mr. Molyneaux:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the security situation.

Mr. Brooke: Since I answered a similar question on 19 July 1990, there have been 40 deaths arising from the security situation in Northern Ireland, 27 of which have occurred since 1 October 1990.

The tragic events of recent weeks have provided further evidence of the threat which terrorists continue to pose in Northern Ireland, and of their inhuman cruelty. The overriding priority of the Government will, therefore, remain the defeat of terrorism, from whichever section of the community it comes, through the even-handed and energetic enforcement of the criminal law.

Mr. Molyneaux: Will the Secretary of State be good enough to accede to my request of some months ago that he should consider publishing, in a written report, the outcome of the Stevens inquiry, given the virtual collapse of the unfounded charges against members of the Ulster Defence Regiment?

Mr. Brooke: I shall certainly look into the matter that the right hon. Gentleman has raised.

Rev. William McCrea: Bearing in mind that my constituency is a constant hive of IRA terrorist activity, will the Secretary of State tell the House and my constituents when they, the constituents of mid-Ulster, will have their basic right—the right to live?

Mr. Brooke: The hon. Gentleman expresses a point of view which will evoke the widest possible echo in the Province and throughout the United Kingdom. I pledge to him the support of the security forces in the suppression of terrorism.

Labour Statistics

19. **Mr. William Ross:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the present level of unemployment in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Needham: At 11 October 1990, there were 94,758 unemployed claimants in the Province. Figures show that the underlying downward trend is continuing and seasonally adjusted unemployment is now at its lowest level for over eight years.

Mr. Ross: Anyone who studies a table of travel-to-work areas in the United Kingdom will find that nine of the top 11 in terms of unemployment are to be found in Northern Ireland. What failure of Government policy has brought about that state of affairs after so many years of direct rule and how long does the Minister expect that it will be before the level of unemployment in Northern Ireland reduces to the United Kingdom average?

Mr. Needham: The hon. Gentleman knows that the level of unemployment in Northern Ireland last month continued to decline although it is rising in the rest of the United Kingdom. The economy of Northern Ireland is expanding at a time when the economy is not doing as well elsewhere in the United Kingdom. We should welcome the fact that it is expanding in Northern Ireland and realise that it is terrorism which does so much damage to our chances of further economic success.

PRIME MINISTER

South Belfast

Q1. **Rev. Martin Smyth:** To ask the Prime Minister when she will next visit Belfast, South.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): I had a very successful visit to Northern Ireland on 16 November, but I have no plans to visit the hon. Gentleman's constituency in the immediate future.

Rev. Martin Smyth: You will understand, Mr. Speaker, that Ulster Unionist Members will have empathy with the Prime Minister because we know what betrayal means. May I assure the Prime Minister that if she visits south Belfast she will discover among the majority of my constituents sympathy for her views on Europe? Having suffered from centralised bureaucracy, we do not wish to have Brussels bureaucracy.

The Prime Minister: I hope to visit the Province many times in the future, perhaps in a slightly different capacity, and I may then come to visit the hon. Gentleman's constituency. I believe that our policy on Europe appeals to most people in this country and I believe that it is right.

Engagements

Q2. **Mr. Marlow:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 22 November.

The Prime Minister: This morning I chaired a meeting of the Cabinet. At 12.45 pm I had an audience of Her Majesty the Queen. Later this afternoon I shall lead for the Government against the motion tabled in the name of the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Marlow: Does my right hon. Friend accept that those of us on the Government side of the House who share her objectives, whatever our roles may have been in recent weeks, believe that this is a time of sadness and happiness? It is a time of sadness for my right hon. Friend, bearing in mind the great well of affection for her that exists throughout the House, and a time of happiness in celebration of what has been, is and will remain the greatest peacetime political reign of this century. This will be a day of dedication to sustain and build on the achievements of the Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher.

The Prime Minister: I thank my hon. Friend. The same person, in a slightly different capacity, will be available to serve Britain in whatsoever way it happens.

Mr. Kinnock: May I pay tribute to the Prime Minister, and to the decision that she made this morning? By that, she showed that she amounts to more than those who have turned on her in recent days.

The right hon. Lady, I know, considers the principle of choice extremely important, and rightly so. Does she agree that the people of Britain should now be given the power of choice in a general election?

The Prime Minister: I thank the right hon. Gentleman for his earlier comments. The reply to his later question is no—no more than we had a general election when Mr. Wilson was replaced by Mr. Callaghan.

Mr. Churchill: Is my right hon. Friend aware that she deserves the gratitude of the entire nation for her role in bringing to an end the Soviet part in the arms race, and burying once and for all the cold war between the super-powers? It is in that capacity that she will be remembered as the greatest peacetime Prime Minister this country has ever had.

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my hon. Friend both for his staunchness in defence and for his remarks. It was a great privilege to attend the CSCE conference in Paris and to sign some of the disarmament agreements. The new CSCE really ushers in a new order in Europe —and, I hope, a very successful, peaceful one.

Mr. Ashdown: May I say to the Prime Minister that many of us recognise that she had to make a very tough decision this morning? We believe that she made the right decision and made it with great dignity. May I also say to her that, however wide our political divisions—and they are, of course, very wide—no one can doubt the special style that she brought to the Dispatch Box or the courage, conviction and determination that she brought to her premiership?

May I perhaps ask the Prime Minister to use this opportunity to offer the House any advice that she may have for a successor?

The Prime Minister: Apart from the last bit, I thank the right hon. Gentleman for his kindness. May I remind the House that I expect to be here on Tuesday afternoon, and possibly even on Thursday afternoon, so I hope that the House will be as kind then as it is today.

Agriculture Reform

Q3. **Mr. Teddy Taylor** (Southend, East): To ask the Prime Minister if she will raise at the next meeting of the European Council the implications of the agricultural reform plans agreed by the Agriculture Council on 6 November.

The Prime Minister: I raised this matter at the last European Council meeting. The Government have played a central role in supporting the European Commission's proposals and enabling the Community to table its offer at the talks in Geneva.

Mr. Taylor: Will the Prime Minister confirm that jobs and prosperity in Britain and throughout Europe may be seriously affected by an international trade war unless the EEC produces a meaningful reform of the absurd and costly common agricultural policy? Will she remind the bright chaps now standing for election that the average cost per household of the CAP is now £5·20 per week more than the total net cost per household of the poll tax?

Finally, will the Prime Minister accept the good wishes and gratitude of all Conservatives in Southend, East for the fantastic job that she has done for common sense, freedom and democracy?

The Prime Minister: I very much agree with my hon. Friend. Jobs and prosperity depend on obtaining freer trade and we played a prominent part in that recently at the last meeting of the European Council and in the tabling of proposals to GATT.

I will, of course, respond to my hon. Friend's invitation to remind my colleagues who are standing for election, but let me say this to him: I shall remind them whether they are standing for election or not.

Dr. Godman: With regard to the decisions made at that meeting, does the Prime Minister agree that it is essential for our hill farmers to be given the protection that they so manifestly deserve? In the light of assurances that she has given me in the past, does she also agree that those decisions contain an awful, serious warning for our fishermen vis-a-vis the changes that the Spanish and others wish to inflict on the common fisheries policy? If she will not be here to defend our fishermen, will she urge her successor also to be worthy of our defence?

The Prime Minister: I think that, for once, I can agree with the hon. Gentleman. Our hill farmers are vital to the health and the whole structure of those areas. We have tried to increase the grants available to them because we have recognised their importance not only to farming but to the rural areas.

The fisheries question has always been one of the most difficult in the Community. So far, we have had a pretty good deal for our fishermen and we shall continue to work for that. As the hon. Gentleman knows, the vital question of fishing boats is pending and many people will be happier when that has been resolved, preferably to our advantage.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Will my right hon. Friend accept from me the love and affection of millions of people in my part of the world who over the years have looked to her with the greatest admiration and delight?

The Prime Minister: I am especially grateful to receive that message from my hon. Friend. We were at college together, and I think that we have been together ever since.

Engagements

Q4. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Prime Minister is she will list her official engagements for Thursday 22 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. and learned Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Janner: May I be permitted to thank the Prime Minister for the many personal kindnesses that, over many years, she has shown to Back Benchers on both sides of the House? At the same time, however, I must say that my constituents are deeply concerned that she has left the place in such a shambles. Is she aware that they are desperately worried about the poll tax, the deepening recession, the health service, the education system, and the whole shambles——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Question please.

Mr. Janner: Will the Prime Minister say who she thinks should share the blame for what is, after all, a Conservative mess?

The Prime Minister: The hon. and learned Gentleman was always a good advocate and he can speak to any brief, but I do not believe that he believes a word of that.

Sir John Stokes: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the age of chivalry has gone and been succeeded by economists and calculators? Does not she look back with pride and satisfaction on all those years when she was leader of this country and a world statesman?

The Prime Minister: The age of chivalry will not have gone while my hon. Friend is a Member of this House. I certainly look back with some pride and some satisfaction on our achievements for our country over the past eleven and a half years.

Q5. **Mr. Maginnis:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday, 22 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Maginnis: May I convey to the Prime Minister the gratitude of my constituents for her visit last Friday to Enniskillen and their admiration for her courage as she visited the frontier post at Derryadd, where sadly two of our soldiers were killed a short time ago? Is she convinced of the need to maintain such permanent patrol bases for the welfare of the community and also of the foolishness that it would be if they were removed and, therefore, more territory surrendered to the terrorists?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. Those vehicle crossing checkpoints are obviously important to the confidence of those who live in

the area. That checkpoint is an example of the dangers faced by the Army personnel who man them. As the hon. Gentleman knows, we are taking every possible precaution to learn lessons from that attack. As I went around the border areas, once again I could only be very impressed by the courage and bravery both of our soldiers and of our policemen who work in such areas.

Mr. Aitken: Has my right hon. Friend considered that the voice of a great former Prime Minister could be extremely influential on great issues of state such as our future role in Europe? *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Aitken: My question was directed to a great former Prime Minister.

Will my right hon. Friend assure her many friends in the House and the country that she will continue to champion the causes for which she has fought so valiantly, and will she continue to raise her voice in favour of a referendum on some of the great constitutional issues that may confront us?

The Prime Minister: What my hon. Friend says had in fact secretly occurred to me—that one's voice might be listened to after. I believe that we now have a policy for the future of Europe behind which we can all unite and I believe that many people in other countries in Europe believe in a Europe of nation states and in co-operation between those nation states.

The Gulf (Troop Deployments)

3.31 pm

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. Tom King): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement on further deployments of British forces to the Gulf.

It is now three and a half months since Iraq invaded Kuwait and it has continued to defy the United Nations demand to withdraw. Sanctions have left Iraq increasingly isolated; the Royal Navy has played an important part in this embargo. But Saddam Hussein shows no sign yet of complying with United Nations resolutions and ending his barbaric treatment of the Kuwaiti people and the hostages whom he has detained illegally. Moreover, there are now more than 400,000 Iraqi troops in and near Kuwait.

It remains the Government's firm objective to resolve this crisis as soon as possible and by peaceful means. To do this, it is essential to establish a credible offensive military option. Saddam Hussein must be made to realise that he is faced with a military force which will otherwise compel him to withdraw.

The House will be aware that there are now 30 countries involved in this multinational effort by land, sea and air, and of the significant increases in forces now in Saudi Arabia and neighbouring countries. In particular, President Bush has announced very substantial increases in United States forces.

The Government believe that it is right to make a further significant contribution to this multinational effort. My hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces announced last week that we were reducing the notice to move of Army units to allow prompt deployment once the final decision was taken. The Government have today decided to deploy an extra brigade, a divisional HQ and supporting arms. They will join 7 Armoured Brigade in Saudi Arabia to form the 1st Armoured Division.

The additional brigade will be the 4th Brigade from Germany, with an armoured regiment of Challenger tanks, two armoured infantry battalions equipped with Warrior fighting vehicles, an armoured reconnaissance squadron, a field regiment Royal Artillery, together with engineers and other supporting services.

Additional equipment deploying with the division will include M109 and M110 self-propelled guns, tracked and towed Rapier and two multiple-launch batteries. Lynx anti-tank helicopters and additional support helicopters will be sent. In all, some 14,000 additional Army personnel will be deployed, which will bring the strength of 1st Armoured Division to some 25,000, and the total number of United Kingdom forces committed to more than 30,000.

The command arrangements that we have agreed provide for United Kingdom forces to be placed under the tactical control of a United States commander for specific actions where this makes military sense. On the same basis, 1st Armoured Division may have a United States brigade assigned to its tactical control.

Certain key skills required for this deployment will need to be offset by the selective use of reservists. I hope that this can be met by asking individual members of the reserve, particularly those with medical training and experience, to rejoin on short-term engagements and I would be grateful if employers would take a sympathetic view of any such requests.

The Government have also decided to send two mo mine counter-measures vessels to the Gulf. These for increases will raise the operating cost of the deployment £10 million per week and there will be substantial initi costs, too.

The formation of a United Kingdom armoured divisio will represent a potent increase in the fighting capability British forces in Saudi Arabia. With the further maj American deployments, and the continued build-up units from 30 other countries in the multinational forc the deployment that I have announced today is the cleare possible message to Saddam Hussein that there is credible military option and that he must now obser resolution 660, end his aggression, release the hostag and leave Kuwait.

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): I a grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for notifying t House of the Government's decision. Will he confirm th these troops, like the United Kingdom service men wh have already been sent to Saudi Arabia, are going to Sau Arabia at the invitation of the Saudi Arabi Government, under the provisions of article 51 of t United Nations charter, on which basis Labour Membe and our party conference accepted that the sending of su troops is necessary and justifiable?

The Secretary of State gave details of the additio cost. How much of that cost will be met by the Sau Arabian Government, who already make some contrib tion to the cost of British troops in that country? Will confirm that it is the wish of the British Government th the 10 United Nations Security Council resolutio demanding the unconditional withdrawal of Iraq fr Kuwait should be implemented by the sanctions poli reinforced by the air and sea blockades in which the Ro Navy and Royal Air Force participate? Does he agree th those sanctions should be given maximum time to wo

Will the right hon. Gentleman assure the House that United Kingdom Government actively support moves the United Nations for Security Council authority for a use of force that may be considered? Do the Governm agree with President Gorbachev that the Security Cou should meet without delay to consider the Kuwait iss Mr.Gorbachev said yesterday:

"There is a need to act and get Iraq out of Kuwait. must be resolute."

The whole House will agree with his words.

Mr. King: I am very grateful for the right h Gentleman's welcome for my statement. We w sanctions to be pursued as effectively as possible and lo to achieve the maximum possible agreement and supp through the Security Council in support of the sancti and of the resolutions to ensure the ending of aggression against Kuwait. When I was in Saudi Arab I received confirmation that the host Government wo provide free food, fuel, water, transport and accommo tion for our forces, which we much appreciate. We h had offers, through the Western European Union, fr Germany, which is offering us help with medical suppl the fitting out of a complete field hospital and substan amounts, we believe, of cash support. We appreciate th and other countries in the Western European Union helping.

I can also confirm that these further forces follow from the original invitation that my right hon. Fri received from his Majesty King Fahd. When I was in Sa

Arabia last week, I discussed the possibility of reinforcement. Both King Fahd and Prince Sultan made it clear that that would be very welcome. I am pleased to say that Opposition spokesmen and the Select Committee are on their way to see our forces there tomorrow. They are due to meet King Fahd, as we have arranged for a meeting with him, and I think that they will hear how welcome our forces are, and how much the Saudi Government appreciate our response to their invitation.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I know that the House appreciates the importance of the debate that follows this important statement. There is also a business statement today. I propose not to allow questions on this statement to run beyond 4 o'clock. I ask hon. Members who feel that they could put a question on another occasion to do so.

Mr. Michael Heseltine (Henley): Will my right hon. Friend understand that, once the Government had taken the right and proper decision to support the international force in the Gulf, it was essential that the military capability of that force had total credibility? Will he therefore recognise that the announcement that he has made this afternoon carries the wholehearted and unanimous support of all hon. Members on this side of the House?

Mr. King: May I say to my right hon. Friend how much I appreciate his making that position absolutely clear, and that we stand together? I appreciate, and I have never doubted, that we have the total support of Conservative Members and I am grateful for the support of all responsible Members from both sides of the House for our position.

Mr. David Lambie (Cunninghame, South): Is the Minister not being slightly hypocritical when he says that he is sending a credible military force to the Gulf? Will he confirm that the tanks in the Gulf at present are using spares—including engines and guns—supplied from tanks that he is now going to send to the Gulf? When they have no spares, how can they be a credible military force?

Mr. King: I do not know where the hon. Gentleman got that information from. I can assure him that it is absolute rubbish.

Sir Michael Marshall (Arundel): My right hon. Friend has spoken about the commitment of Britain as one of 30 countries involved in the Gulf. Will he take the opportunity to assure the House that he feels confident that the process is mirrored in other participating countries and say whether other Arab countries—given their significance—will continue to play a part, just as we are doing?

Mr. King: Obviously, the contributions vary. I have announced forces which amount to a British division and can confirm that Egypt has already sent one division and is likely to send another. Syria already has a brigade there and is likely to build it up to a division.

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): May I tell the Secretary of State that his announcement has our support as part of the international effort to persuade Saddam Hussein to withdraw peacefully from Kuwait? There is no doubt that, if that effort is to be successful, it must be backed by a credible military option. Will he confirm that, even if express United Nations authority is not obtained, it will still be the policy of her Majesty's Government not to participate in any military operation, unless it is as the result of an international decision to do so?

Mr. King: We have always made it plain that the legal position is quite clear, if we are invited by Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, exercising their legitimate right of self-defence. None the less, we want the widest possible international support for this. Everyone must take great encouragement from the discussions that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary had in Paris and their outcome, and from all the signs that there is a real sense of unanimity informing the actions of the Security Council, in a way that we have perhaps never seen before.

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith (Wealden); In warmly supporting my right hon. Friend's statement, which recognises that we must have a credible military option, may I ask when these troops are likely to arrive in the Gulf?

Mr. King: The reconnaissance party will leave this afternoon and the first logistic movements will start at the weekend, perhaps on Friday. The forces will fly there and arrive progressively after Christmas and at the very beginning of the new year.

Mr. A. E. P. Duffy (Sheffield, Attercliffe): Is the Secretary of State aware that there is a growing feeling in the United States Congress that the only United States NATO ally whose contribution in the Gulf can be taken seriously is the United Kingdom? In view of the Secretary of State's statement, is not it clear that Britain needs to do nothing further to remove the impression that American youth is once more being called on to die in defence of Europe's interests?

Mr. King: We have made no secret of the fact that we would like to see the widest possible international contribution. It is true that Germany has a problem with its constitution and its legal position, but it has made it clear that it wishes to give assistance. I pay tribute to the very real assistance that the German authorities have given to the British Army of the Rhine and our other forces in Germany, with special extra training needs. We seek the greatest contribution from all countries. France is making significant contributions. I hope that those contributions can be properly knitted into an effective allied multinational effort.

Sir Antony Buck (Colchester, North): Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is gratifying that his announcement has all-party support? As the build-up of the forces progresses, what air support will the additional forces have, whether on an international or Royal Air Force basis?

Mr. King: We are not adding to the air resources in this announcement. There are, of course, substantial air resources in Saudi Arabia and neighbouring states. There is good co-operation between the United States, Saudi Arabian, United Kingdom and other air forces in the area. It is proving to be an area of effective co-operation.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): The Secretary of State talked about key skills among reservists. How about the

[Mr. Tam Dalyell]

skill of putting out raging oil fires? As there is only one Red Adair team, would someone on either Front Bench like to explain what will happen if a series of oilfields goes on fire in Iraq and Saudi Arabia? That is the reality and someone somewhere had better answer that question pretty soon before we talk about further deployment.

Mr. King: If we respond in that way to every threat from Baghdad, what message shall I, or the hon. Gentleman, give our hostages in Kuwait and Iraq? Shall we tell them that the aggression will not be ended because we are not prepared to face the challenge?

Mr. David Tredinnick (Bosworth): Given the large increase in the numbers of troops who are to go to the Gulf and the importance of morale, will my right hon. Friend reconsider telephone facilities for troops who want to call home? During a visit to the Falklands garrison, I was told that the special concessionary rates for troops were of crucial importance in maintaining morale there. Will he apply the same principle to our garrison in the Gulf?

Mr. King: Very considerable efforts are being made to establish effective telephone communications for our service men at, we hope, a welfare rate. My hon. Friend will be aware that the ability to call not only the United Kingdom but Germany is important, because many of our soldiers' families live there.

Mr. Ken Maginnis (Fermanagh and South Tyrone): On behalf of the Ulster Unionist party, may I welcome the Secretary of State's statement? While many of us hoped and prayed that sanctions would be effective, we did not believe that they would be. As Saddam Hussein is in the process of moving another 250,000 troops into Kuwait, we feel that the time for action is perhaps upon us. Does the Secretary of State feel confident that, with the transitional state of our Government today, he has the scope to take the crucial decision that may have to be taken at any moment?

Mr. King: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his support. It is probably the first time that I have had it, even in my earlier incarnations. I certainly appreciate what he has said on behalf of his party. I hope that he agrees that, as some of the important exchanges have shown, there is no question about the Government's authority and ability to take decisions in the national interest. I am aware of the support of the House in recognising that, if our service men are to be asked to go forward in this way, they must have time for acclimatisation, be properly trained in the theatre and have our support. I am grateful to both sides of the House for their support and recognition of that fact.

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): Does my right hon. Friend agree that our reserves, the Territorial Army, the Royal Auxiliary Air Force and the naval reserves, are only too keen to support our forces in the Gulf? Would it not be easier to introduce legislation under Order in Council so that their jobs are guaranteed while they are away?

Mr. King: I certainly recognise that. This afternoon, my office had a call from another Government Department about a civil servant who has asked permission to go. I look to the Government to set a good example to employers to take a sympathetic view. There is no doubting the willingness of many reservists to pla part if possible. I shall certainly consider my hon. F important point.

Ms. Dawn Primarolo (Bristol, South): Wi Secretary of State explain why the increased deployr troops is occurring now, when sanctions have no given enough time to work and the United N Security Council is being urged to meet again to c the situation? Is it because the Americans are prepa take us into a bloody war in the Gulf?

Mr. King: The hon. Lady will understand that take time for our forces to reach the Gulf. That g opportunity for UN action which we hope successful and it sends a clear warning. I do not kno long she is prepared to allow the atrocities and outr Kuwait to continue. I am sure that she is not see defend them but is looking for the earliest possible the aggression. Many hon. Members on both sides House believe that this aggression will not end pe until Saddam Hussein is convinced that, otherw faces the certainty of military action.

Mr. Jonathan Sayeed (Bristol, East): Follow right hon. Friend's visit to the Gulf, will he confi the morale of the service men remains high? Does h that they are fully aware that, whoever leads th party of ours, the party will continue firmly to service men in the Gulf?

Mr. King: I can confirm that morale is extreme I delivered precisely that message standing in the Saudi Arabia a week ago. I said that, whoever Government in future, there was no questioning t commitment of the Government and the p confirmed that to Sir Peter de la Billiere this mo

Mr. John McWilliam (Blaydon): Will the Secr State take this opportunity to congratulate the en of Vickers in Leeds and, particularly, in Newc producing conversion kits for tanks so quickly? also take this opportunity to say a word ab arrangements that he has put in train for paying assistance towards additional insurance premi service men stationed in the Gulf?

Mr. King: On the latter point, we are paying 90 of any additonal premium. I am grateful to t Gentleman for giving me the opportunity to pay to British industry. Some amazing things are happ factories throughout the country in support of o in the Gulf. I am extremely grateful to the man whose work is enabling the achievement of deliv which in normal circumstances would be thoug impossible.

Mr. Ian Bruce (Dorset, South): My right hon knows that a large number of people are now bein out of Kuwait or are leaving under their own ste sure that all the able-bodied Kuwaiti citizens wou go back to fight, if necessary, to recover their cou we giving them the opportunity to enlist, to be a organised and even to perform jobs behind the support of the armed forces in the area?

Mr. King: I can confirm that a significant number of Kuwaitis have enlisted. We are willing to give any assistance we can, as is Saudi Arabia. Those people are training at this time.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): If the Secretary of State will not accept it from me, as the Prime Minister would not accept yesterday, that it is possible for the Ministry of Defence to estimate casualties were a war to take place, what does he say to Colonel David Hackworth, the most decorated American soldier in Vietnam? He has estimated that there will be 50,000 casualties in the first two weeks of the war—only 7,000 less than the total of American dead in 12 years in Vietnam. At what level would the Government decide that the casualty rate was too high for thousands of young men and women to lose their lives for a feudal autocracy that happens to have a couple of oil wells?

Mr. King: I have not seen that forecast, but the hon. Gentleman may understand that the precise reason for the enlargement of the American deployment and part of the reason for my announcement today is to ensure that our military force is totally credible. That gives us the best possible opportunity for this matter to be solved by peaceful means—by the threat of force without the use of it. If there were to be conflict, that enlarged deployment would also give us the best possible chance of minimising casualties.

Mr. Derek Conway (Shrewsbury and Atcham): As a reservist, may I ask my right hon. Friend to have a word for me with the pairing Whip?

On a serious note, will my right hon. Friend pay tribute to those civilian personnel in Saudi Arabia, such as those from Perkins Engines in Shrewsbury, which builds the engines for the Challenger tanks, for the part that they are playing in supporting our service men? Will he also pay tribute to their families who are backing them from home?

Mr. King: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's offer, which I shall certainly consider. On the latter point, it is true that there are a number of companies whose employees are out in Saudi Arabia. They are giving direct support to our troops through their work on the equipment and I am very grateful for that.

Mr. Gavin Strang (Edinburgh, East): While I welcome the Secretary of State's reference in his previous answer to the need to solve this crisis by peaceful means, does he accept that, when sanctions were introduced, no one seriously suggested that they would work within four months or so? It was never supposed that those sanctions would be effective on food supplies; rather that they would affect Iraq's earnings from oil and spares. We would need at least a year before anyone could reasonably suggest that the sanctions have not worked. Will he bear that in mind?

Mr. King: And will the hon. Member or I tell our hostages in Kuwait and Iraq that they have the certainty of no further effort being made to achieve their liberation? Are we to allow the total destruction of a country before our eyes for a further year while the Security Council sits paralysed, making no contribution to its resolution?

Mr. John Browne (Winchester): Will my right hon. Friend accept that Saddam Hussein and other enemies of our country, wherever they may lie, must have heaved a huge sigh of relief at the news of our Prime Minister's resignation this morning?

Mr. King: There is no doubt that my right hon. Friend has given outstanding leadership to the free world on this issue, as she has on so many other matters. She would be the first to say that there is no question but that we stand united as a Government, and I believe as a country, to see the aggression ended, the removal of Iraqi troops from Kuwait and the restoration of the legitimate Government.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): Will the Secretary of State please explain to the House why Japan, which must obtain the majority of its energy supplies from the middle east, is making such a sparse contribution to the Gulf effort? Can he also give me some explanation about communications from the Gulf back home, which I can pass on to my constituents? I raised this matter earlier. I do not want people to have to sell blood to pay for telephone calls home. What steps is the right hon. Gentleman taking to make cheap and effective communications available to my constituents so that they may communicate with their loved ones?

Mr. King: We are keen to improve communications. I am told that the mail has improved considerably and I hope that that is true. I shall be interested to receive from hon. Members who are going out there tomorrow any reports showing whether that is the case.

The answer to the hon. Gentleman's question about the contribution of Japan is that, obviously, we would welcome the maximum contribution. I know that the hon. Gentleman appreciates the constitutional situation that Japan faces. So far, that country has given $2 billion towards some of the costs involved. Obviously, we are anxious to see the maximum contribution being made, in terms of military help and financial resources, from wherever such contributions may come.

Mr. Rupert Allason (Torbay): Is my right hon. Friend satisfied with the arrangements that have been made for the control of the media in respect of the sensitivity of information relating to the deployment of our troops? Is he satisfied that there will be no repetition of the incident during the Falklands campaign, when troops deployed on a clandestine operation in San Carlos water switched on the world service of the BBC to hear all about their deployment?

Mr. King: There are memories of events in the Falklands from which we all, including the broadcasting authorities, have sought to learn. Matters will be more difficult if we come to conflict in the Gulf because of the difference between a seaborne force and a large country with many accesses. I believe that the broadcasting and other media authorities are conscious of some exceptionally difficult problems that could arise.

Business of the House

4.1 pm

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John MacGregor): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I will make a statement about the business for next week.

MONDAY 26 NOVEMBER—Second Reading of the Statutory Sick Pay Bill.

Motion on the Civil Jurisdiction and Judgments Act 1982 (Amendment) Order 1990.

TUESDAY 27 NOVEMBER—Second Reading of the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Bill.

Motion on the Teachers' Pay and Conditions Act 1987 (Continuation) Order 1990.

WEDNESDAY 28 NOVEMBER—Until about seven o'clock Committee and remaining stages of the Statutory Sick Pay Bill.

Second Reading of the Development Board for Rural Wales Bill.

Motion to take note of EC document relating to authorised tobacco advertising. Details will be given in the *Official Report*.

THURSDAY 29 NOVEMBER—Committee and remaining stages of the Development Board for Rural Wales Bill.

Proceedings on the Import and Export Control Bill.

Motion to take note of EC document relating to controls on the acquisition and possession of weapons. Details will be given in the *Official Report*.

FRIDAY 30 NOVEMBER—Private Members' motions.

MONDAY 3 DECEMBER—Second Reading of the Community Charges (Substitute Setting) Bill, followed by proceedings on the Caravans (Standard Community Charge and Rating) Bill.

[Wednesday 28 November
Relevant European Community Document:
6071/90 Advertising of tobacco products
Relevant Reports of European Legislation Committee: HC 11-xxxiii (1989-90) and HC 29-ii (1990-91).

Thursday 29 November
Relevant European Community Documents:
(a) 10074/89 Control of Acquisition and possession of weapons
(b) 8836/90 Control of Acquisition and possession of weapons.
Relevant Reports of European Legislation Committee:
(a) HC 11-vii (1989-90)
(b) HC 29-ii (1990-91).]

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): What purpose can be served by pursuing the programme of a Prime Minister who has just been forced from office? What value is there in asking the House of Commons to deal with the business of a Government who are in total disarray? Is not it obvious from the events of this week that even Members on the Government Benches have no confidence in the programme of a Prime Minister whom they have signally failed to support? Why should the House be burdened next week with legislation that is irrelevant to an economy once again sliding dangerously into recession? Is not it a fact that, as Britain needs a new agenda for the 1[9]
new Labour Government, the case for the di
Parliament and a general election is now ov[er]

Mr. MacGregor: The hon. Gentleman ha[s]
opportunity to ask questions about busines
tonight at the end of the debate will give hi
answer to his questions. We shall then get
important legislation that we are taking
House, next week and beyond.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): Is my right
aware that the way in which the national h[ealth]
reforms are being implemented in their first ye
even worse the burden that the London teachi
are placing on health authorities outside Lon[don]
ask the Secretary of State for Health whether
an early debate on this important matter? It
that London's over-hospitalling ceased to l[ie]
burden on health authorities in the rest of th

Mr. MacGregor: I shall draw that point to
of my right hon. Friend, but my hon. Friend
there are other opportunities to raise that
House. I cannot see any opportunity next w[eek]

Mrs. Ray Michie (Argyll and Bute): The
House may not be aware of a report of what
be the tragic loss of a fishing vessel from Ca[ith]
constituency at about 2.15 this morning,
submerged submarine. Will the right hon. G[en]
the Secretary of State for Defence to come
tonight to make a statement about this appal

Mr. MacGregor: I am sure that the whole
sorry to hear that sad news. I shall draw tha
right hon. Friend's attention, but, in vie[w]
debate, I am not sure whether it will be possi[ble]
make a statement. Nevertheless, I shall
something can be done.

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melt
right hon. Friend accept my congratulations
predecessor and to his predecessor but one
them, have at long last achieved a result
constituents can go round the Line of R[oad]
having to queue in the rain? At long last, fa
place in the House of Lords, under the Norm
that our constituents can queue in the dry. I th
hon. Friend for that.

Mr. MacGregor: I am grateful to my righ
and shall certainly convey his thanks to my
In all honesty, I do not think that I played a
in it.

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South):
of the House aware that the closure of hospi
now become the equivalent of a national
have the bizarre spectacle of hospital waiti
while hospital wards are closing. May we ha
this next week so that the three candidates
leadership are made aware of the chaotic co
present Conservative policies?

Mr. MacGregor: I do not think tha
opportunity for a debate on that point ne
right hon. Gentleman knows that there has
increase in health service funds under the Go
least in the current autumn statement, and

waiting lists are now 50 per cent. lower than 10 years ago. The waiting list fund is making a big contribution to reducing waiting lists.

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton): Is my right hon. Friend aware that a motion of no confidence in the Labour council in Hackney was debated yesterday? Is there a chance of an early debate on government in London so that we can discuss maladministration by Labour councils, and especially the number of empty council houses and the millions of pounds of unpaid rent?

Mr. MacGregor: I should be very happy to find an opportunity to debate these matters and to put the spotlight on that sort of performance. However, in view of what looks like a fairly busy programme before Christmas, I do not think that there will be an opportunity for such a debate in Government time before Christmas.

Miss Joan Lestor (Eccles): Bearing in mind the lobby of children and young people on Monday in defence of the UN convention on the rights of the child, the various local authority activities taking place this week to celebrate that event, and the fact that 57 countries have now ratified that convention, when does the Leader of the House intend to bring the convention to the House to be ratified? Why are we dragging our heels?

Mr. MacGregor: I think that my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary made a statement about that recently. I shall certainly check that point and perhaps write to the hon. Lady about it, as well as considering the point that she has made.

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): Does my right hon. Friend agree that now is the time to get on with today's business so that we can have a resounding vote of confidence in Her Majesty's Government and, in due course, a resounding vote of confidence from the British people? The Labour party could not produce three candidates as good as we have produced to lead our party.

Mr. MacGregor: I very much agree with my hon. Friend's point about the vote of confidence in Her Majesty's Government. I have no doubt that as soon as we get to the debate the position of Conservative Members and of the vote tonight will be made very clear.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Will the Leader of the House arrange for a statement next week by the Secretary of State for Social Security on the urgent need to uprate the grant from the DSS to residential homes for the elderly? Is he aware that York house, Plaistow will have to close next month because of the Government's policies? Does he recognise that rolling back the frontiers of the state can sometimes roll back the moral obligations of society which some politicians believe do not exist?

Mr. MacGregor: I think that my right hon. Friend has recently made an announcement about these matters. There has been an increase. The amount of taxpayers' money going into support for the elderly, particularly in respect of residential homes, has increased substantially in recent years.

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): Is my right hon. Friend aware of the widespread support that Labour Members give to the qualities of the French educatio system? Could we debate the English system versus t French system, given the lessons being learnt in Franc

Mr. MacGregor: My hon. Friend makes a good poi When I was Secretary of State for Education and Scien I looked into these matters, as the Leader of t Opposition had made comparisons with the French syste and suggested that it was the prototype for us to follow. is not only the recent revolts in Paris, showing conce about the French educational system, which are relevar In this country we spend more per pupil than do t French; we pay our teachers better and we have le crowded classrooms; and the same applies to high education. I should be happy to hold a debate to ma these comparisons, since the Opposition have highlight them, but I cannot promise a debate next week.

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): Will t Leader of the House find time in the near future for debate on energy in so far as it relates to the assistan given on the continent to glass industries? He may aware of the increasing international acclaim for o packaging industry—especially for glass and ceramics and perhaps with the assistance given to our Fren competitors the industry might be able to advan worldwide.

Mr. MacGregor: I shall draw that point to the attenti of my right hon. Friend, but I certainly do not think th there will be an opportunity to debate these matters ne week.

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): Will my right ho Friend give some thought to holding a debate on t situation in Iraq? Is not it becoming clear that Oppositi Members are losing their nerve over facing up to Sadda Hussein?

Mr. MacGregor: I suspect that there are certain divisions among the Opposition, but from the support th the official Opposition gave to my right hon. Friend statement today it was clear what their position is—and am grateful for it.

Mr. Jim Sillars (Glasgow, Govan): Will the Leader the House confirm that the tabling of the motion of confidence has had a consequential effect on this week agenda in so far as the debate on the Scottish econom with reference to the crisis in the Scottish steel indust has been taken off the agenda and for some reason is n on next week's? Is he aware that the Scottish steel worke will find it incomprehensible that the leader of the Labo party was more concerned to save Thatcher than he w about the Scottish steel industry?

Mr. MacGregor: I seem to recall that the ho Gentleman made the same point the other night, when told him that it was not a matter for me. No doubt t Leader of the Opposition will speak for himself. It w necessary to make a day available this week for the moti which the Opposition wished to table. The timing of t next Supply day debate will be a matter for discussion the usual channels.

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Waterside): Is r right hon. Friend aware of the concern felt by users of products about the possibility of oil companies maki windfall profits out of the increases in oil prices as a res

[Mr. Michael Colvin]

of the crisis in the Gulf? May we have an early opportunity to debate this, because evidence taken by the Select Committee on Energy this morning suggested that the oil companies are not making such windfall profits, although the countries producing the oil could be in receipt of considerable additional revenues which they would not have received had the crisis not taken place.

Mr. MacGregor: I think that the profits recently announced by Shell and BP were heavily influenced by stock appreciation. As my hon. Friend will know, the oil companies' pricing policies were examined by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission in February and again by the Office of Fair Trading in August, and the industry was found to be competitive and not operating against the public interest. I know that there has been discussion about recent prices and I was interested to hear what my hon. Friend said. I cannot find an opportunity for a debate, but I am grateful to him for raising the matter.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): May I underline what was said by the hon. Member for Argyll and Bute (Mrs. Michie) about the sad incident this morning involving the fishing vessel Antares and a Royal Navy submarine? I and some hon. Members from fishing constituencies in the west of Scotland have been warning for some time that such a thing could happen. We made a number of suggestions over 18 months to the Department of Transport about how such incidents might be avoided, but the Department has taken no action on those suggestions. When will a statement be made to the House about this tragic incident and about what is being done to avoid a repetition?

Mr. MacGregor: I do not think that I can add much to what I said earlier. I shall look at the question of an early statement. As the House will realise, it would be difficult to have such a statement today because of the business that we have in front of us. I shall draw to my right hon. Friend's attention what the hon. Members for Argyll and Bute (Mrs. Michie) and for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) have said.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Again, I have to say that it is with regret that I have to end business questions. I shall call two more hon. Members from each side and then we must move on.

Mr. Michael Morris (Northampton, South): May I draw my right hon. Friend's attention to early-day motion 61 on an EC birds directive on pest species?

[That this House notes with deep concern the Government's intention to bow to European Community pressure demanding amendments to United Kingdom legislation, concerning pest birds; that this concerns the necessity for general licences for the killing and taking of the 13 pest species, including crows, magpies and woodpigeons, and which cause serious damage to property, crops and livestock as well as to the eggs and nests of song and game birds; and urges the Government to bring pressure to bear on the European Commission and Council to amend the European Community Birds Directive to permit the killing and taking of the 13 pest species throughout the United Kingdom as at present.]

I understand that there have been some in the EEC in terms of withdrawing the restr shooting of wood pigeons and other pest sp right hon. Friend arrange for an early stat Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Foo matter may be totally clarified?

Mr. MacGregor: I understand the conce matter and, like some of my hon. Friends, I a good deal of correspondence on it. I refer m to the answer given yesterday by my right ho Secretary of State for the Environment to m the Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway).

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): I sho able to join the hon. Member for Rutland (Mr. Latham) in thanking the Leader of t something accomplished. When is the Leade likely to announce a Select Committee Ireland because, like visitors to the House, will not go away?

Mr. MacGregor: Yes, I am aware of questions on Select Committees, but I am no to say anything at this time.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): Does Friend accept that the one body in which n faith is Cleveland county council? It is alway more and more money and has now come up intellectual wheeze of changing the colour engines from red to vermilion.

Mr. MacGregor: My hon. Friend makes well.

Mr. Stuart Randall (Kingston upon Hu the Leader of the House also seriously con on the national health service? Not only problem of underfunding in the health which every hon. Member knows, but the b policy at the end of the financial year is c problems in Hull health district. This de service is unacceptable. It is causing seriou we must have a debate on the whole q Government's book-balancing policy at yea from their reforms in the NHS.

Mr. MacGregor: There may be an oppo to such matters in the debate that follow think the House is keen to move to. I c anything for next week.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): On a Mr. Speaker. You normally say when you questions, which, as you know, are impo will bear in mind the people who have throughout and whose names are on the li will do that in the usual way at next Thur questions.

Mr. Speaker: I will certainly do that.

Confidence in Her Majesty's Government

Mr. Speaker: I must announce to the House that I have not selected any of the amendments.

4.19 pm

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): I beg to move,

That this House has no confidence in Her Majesty's Government.

In the present circumstances, there is not much of a Government in which to have no confidence. For a long time, the British people have recognised that the Government have failed comprehensively. Political pressures have been building up over many months and they have culminated today in the departure of the Prime Minister. I and my party are delighted to have played our full and proper part in bringing this about.

As the months have passed, we have seen all the signs of division and decay within the Government. As ex-Ministers have testified, the Government are riddled with distrust, just as the Conservative party is racked by disagreement—disagreement that cannot be healed under any leader at any time. The British people know that. That is why they have rejected the Conservative party in every political test—and will go on doing so—from the beginning of last year, in the south Wales by-elections of Pontypridd and Vale of Glamorgan, through the 1989 local elections, through the European elections, through the Mid-Staffordshire by-election, through this year's local elections and through the Bootle and Bradford by-elections. Next week, in Paisley, the results will be the same. [HON. MEMBERS: "What about Eastbourne?"] There was an excellent result in Eastbourne, which caused immense grief to the Conservative party, as did the lost deposits in the many cases when it was fighting against the Labour party and failing to hold seats.

The tale has gone on and will continue. It is a tale of continual rejection of the Government every time the British people get an opportunity. The Government have tried to take evasive action as the tide has risen. We have had shuffles and shifts in ministerial jobs—musicial chairs to the tune of the dead march—but there was, and is, no escape for the Conservatives. Their whole record is against them. The Conservative party has suddenly discovered that the Prime Minister's conduct of government has been wrong, yet the same party only a few weeks ago was prepared to adore that system, falling in behind the Prime Minister and chanting at its conference, "Ten more years." It did not even mean 10 more weeks.

With such duplicity, who can trust such a party? Who can ever trust it again? The people on the Government Benches—Front and Back—supported and still support the freezing of child benefit, the breaking of the link between pensions and earnings, the reduction of housing benefit, the cutting of training budgets and the freezing of care in the community. Those and many other policies were supported heartily by the Conservative party and they brought disadvantage and despair to millions of their fellow citizens across all parts of Britain.

The Government have been undeviating in the application of those policies. Goodness knows, there were plenty of causes for rebellion, but there were few rebels. There was no panic, no demand for the Prime Minister to go when hospital wards were closing and schools crumbling. The Conservatives were not striving to topple the Prime Minister when unemployment went over 3 million or crushing mortgages were imposed and pov was spreading. There were no rebellions, no panicking demands for the Prime Minister to go then. Conservative party summoned the strength of self-int to take action only when its members saw that political careers were in danger of being terminated.

The lack of trust felt by the British people in Government comes as a result of 11 years of mis When they reflect on those 11 years, the British people how it can be that our standards of pensions, child training, transport and much else are lower than tho our neighbours in the European Community.

How can that have happened when Britain has had oil wealth that no one else in Europe has had? It is true other countries in Europe did not have the oil wealth, nor did they have this Government and this Conserva party. All the policies that have so directly tou people's lives have emanated from the head of Government, but they were applauded, supported, v for and implemented by the entire Government, not by the poor woman who has been chosen for ejec today. There are no innocents on the Governm Benches. Conservative Members are all members guilty party which is supporting a guilty Governm There are some Conservative Members who will say there is a great exception to that rule. There some——

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): Tell us a your policies.

Mr. Kinnock: Perhaps I am hearing pleas of not g from the hon. Gentleman and other Conserva Members. Plea bargaining will do them no good. G they are, the whole lot of them.

There are some who will claim that they have alw been against the poll tax. I do not blame them for tha is certain that among all the Tory policies there is not that is more detested by a greater majority of the Br people than the poll tax. They do not just hate——

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): Will the hon. Gentleman tell us what advice he is giving, in authoritative position as Leader of the Opposition Labour councillors in Scotland who are pursuing pe with poinding notices and warrant sales in implementi tax which has no majority in the House and which he abolish if he becomes Prime Minister? Is it not about the right hon. Gentleman said, "Call off the warrant and let us have no more poinding notices—the poll t ended"?

Mr. Kinnock: I shall give the hon. Gentleman the ad that I gave him clearly before he defected from my p As a legislator, he cannot come to the House and legislation and then refuse to accept that legisla outside this place. The advice that I offer to all those can pay is that they should pay. To those who cannot I say that I hope that within such an infamous law e possible sympathy will be extended to them. I say wit fear and no favour that the rule is absolute. Those make the law cannot break the law. It is as simple as

The British people hate the very idea of the poll tax, not only the level at which it is being applied. As it co as such a menace to the Government politically, they tried manipulation. Instead of providing a safety ne

[Mr. Kinnock]

the victims of the poll tax, they have provided a sort of lifebelt to Tory Members in marginal seats whose careers were in jeopardy. Even in that, they have failed.

The Secretary of State for Education and Science has said, "The poll tax is a major problem on our plate." The Secretary of State for the Environment has said, generous as ever, "We are always prepared to look at new proposals." Now there is a new bid in the great poll tax auction. It is called the immediate and fundamental review. At least that is what it was called on 15 November when the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Hesletine) proposed it. In the week since then it has gone through many changes in shape and meaning. I suppose that that is like the right hon. Gentleman himself, who at about quarter past nine this morning reverted to being a stalking horse. The week for the right hon. Gentleman has been a long time in Parliament. I understand, of course, the changes that have taken place for him. After all, like all his right hon. and hon. Friends the right hon. Gentleman voted for the poll tax in Scotland. Indeed, he did not vote against the poll tax legislation for England and Wales. There is some unsteadiness in his position.

Mr. Jonathan Sayeed (Bristol, East): The right hon. Gentleman is advocating consistency. Is his membership of CND consistent with the Labour party's defence policy?

Mr. Kinnock: We heard a welcome statement yesterday about progress that the Prime Minister has played her full part in securing. It was the most comprehensive statement of arms reduction, with the promise of a new common security policy for Europe and the prospect of future nuclear arms reduction. The answer to the hon. Gentleman's question is yes, yes, yes.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): Many of us remember the right hon. Gentleman's speech last year, when he spoke about the idiocy of targeting nuclear weapons on the great cities of eastern Europe at a time when they were moving towards democracy. In the light of that, can the right hon. Gentleman explain how he, as a socialist, can justify spending £9,000 million on placing three Trident submarines on the Clyde estuary?

Mr. Kinnock: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. He has drawn attention to the fact that there is total consistency in the position that I put to the Prime Minister last year about the targeting of medium and short-range weapons on the rest of Europe. I am delighted to see how much progress is being made, with the active involvement of Governments of the east and west.

As for Trident, the hon. Gentleman will be familiar with our programme—to ensure that, by every conceivable means, comprehensive nuclear arms reduction and withdrawal are achieved. Of course, for that purpose, the effective use of our armament will absolutely come into play. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman is very familiar with that position. Of course, the puniness of his party and its influence means that he cannot be expected to play any significant role in the great moves forward that are taking place right across the world.

I was speaking about the variety of poll tax reviews that have been on offer. What is common to all of the reviews——

Mr. Jim Sillars (Glasgow, Govan): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Speaker: Order. The right hon. Gentleman has already given way to two hon. Members from those Benches. If the right hon. Gentleman will not give way, the hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Sillars) must resume his seat.

Mr. Sillars: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I draw your attention to last year's Queen's Speech, in which I tried to intervene on the right hon. Gentleman. He said—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I must hear the point of order, but the hon. Gentleman has been here long enough to know that if the right hon. Gentleman will not give way he must resume his seat.

Mr. Kinnock: I see that, with the hon. Gentleman, history is repeating itself. It was his party that, on 28 March 1979, ushered in a Tory Government; he is trying the same old tricks now.

Mr. Sillars *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The right hon. Gentleman is not giving way, so the hon. Gentleman must resume his seat.

Mr. Kinnock: I was referring to the variety of poll tax reviews currently on offer. Common to all of them, whatever their original concept or the motive in offering them is that, whatever else they profess to do, there is one thing that they will not do—they will not touch the fundamentals of the poll tax. They will not deal with the most basic of the evils of the poll tax—the fact that it is a head tax. That most fundamental feature will not go under any Tory Government or any Tory leader, but go it must, because the poll tax cannot be improved by tinkering or by reviewing. It must be abolished and a Labour Government will abolish it lock, stock and uniform business rate.

The Government's social policies have inflicted disadvantage on millions of people. Their poll tax policies have generated despair and fury. Their economic policies have brought this country into recession once again. It is a central cause of the lack of confidence felt by British people in this Government. The Administration began 11 years ago with policies which provoked recession, eradicated 20 per cent. of British manufacturing capacity——

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Has the right hon. Gentleman missed a page in his speech? I clearly heard—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Points of order of that nature are not at all helpful and tend to disrupt our proceedings.

Mr. Kinnock: I can understand why the hon. Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King) is so reluctant to hear the history of the disaster of the past eleven and a half years.

The Conservative Administration began with a recession, which they provoked, and which eradicated 20 per cent. of British manufacturing capacity. I should have thought that that, at least, would be of interest to the hon. Gentleman, coming from the part of the world that he does. The recession created a huge rise in unemployment and brought the first-ever manufacturing trade deficit in

the history of this country, which in turn established the basis for the massive balance of payments deficit in more recent years. Incidentally, today the month-on-month figure again amounted to more than £1 billion.

It is worth recalling, and fair to recall, that when the right hon. Lady first went to Downing street, she inherited from the previous Labour Administration a £46 million a month balance of payments surplus. The deficit this month is £1·1 billion. That is the reason why Conservative Members should have been protesting. That is the reason why they should have been against this Administration—but the trade position of our country never bothered them. This month is just another in the calendar of loss of markets and increases in deficit.

We are told that the early years of this Government are remembered with pride by all who served in or supported the Government, from Surrey, East to Blaby, from Huntingdon to Witney and, of course, Henley. In subsequent years, especially during periods leading up to general elections, they let a deregulated, credit-financed economy rip. They called those years, "the transformation, the great recovery, the economic miracle"—some miracle, when they pushed the economy back into recession again this year. In this recession, not only is there rising unemployment again, increasing numbers of bankruptcies again, declining output again and falling investment again, but there is increased inflation under a Government who promised zero inflation. What a record—11 oil-rich years with a recession at each end and a miracle in between.

In Britain we need a different way. We must give the same primacy as our competitors do to building and strengthening a modern manufacturing industrial economy. We must put at the centre of our economic policy commitments to education, training, transport and investment in science and technology, research and development, as others do, as our neighbours do. We must create modern employment opportunities and give our young people the means of building a proud and confident future—a future of success. The British people know that that must be done. Our people know that that is the best means of ensuring that Britain does not go on falling further behind the other major economies of the EC.

In 11 years, the Government have never seriously tried to build the productive economy, and they will never do it under any leader. Under no leader can they resolve the fundamental conflicts inside the Conservative party about Britain's future in the EC. *[Interruption.]* That laughter is about 55 per cent. embarrassment.

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): Have not the right hon. Gentleman and his party changed their attitude on whether they wish to be in the Community no fewer than six times in the past 10 years?

Mr. Kinnock: I only wish that the Conservative party would change its attitude so that it could obtain benefit and advantage for the people of Britain from the EC.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): Does the right hon. Gentleman believe that Britain will gain advantage from a single currency?

Mr. Kinnock: First, we would have to define the possibility of obtaining a single currency. By a huge majority, the Labour party warmly embraced closer monetary co-operation in the EC as inevitable and desirable. We have further said, as the hon. Gentleman would know if he had listened to the debates of recent weeks, that in the process of movement it will be essential to achieve three objectives. One is to ensure that there is in that Community, in that development of greater cohesion, in that integration, in that union—*[Interruption.]* Conservative Members do not like it because they do not have a policy—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinnock: There will have to be firm policies for the convergence of economic performance across the Community, firm policies—*[Interruption.]* If Conservative Members will not listen to this, it is no wonder that they go unprepared into the intergovernmental conference chamber.

Secondly, we must ensure that there is a growth orientation because the alternative—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. This kind of behaviour does not add credit to debate in the House of Commons.

Mr. Kinnock: The alterative to that strategy is the very same stagflation that the Government have brought to Britain.

Thirdly, in any form of union there must be proper arrangements for the transfer of resources between regions, without which there will definitely be a two or even three-speed Europe. It is also essential—I am sure that there must be agreement on this in the House—that there is no question of an unaccountable central monetary institution, because that would be as improper as to surrender fiscal powers to a non-accountable body.

Mr. Nigel Lawson (Blaby): The right hon. Gentleman owes it to the House to answer the question that was put to him. Assuming that there is a single European central bank which is accountable, is he saying that he and his party favour a single currency issued by a single European bank responsible for a single monetary policy—yes or no?

Mr. Kinnock: As the right hon. Gentleman will know, there is no yes or no answer now. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I hope that we can proceed in an orderly way.

Mr. Kinnock: The right hon. Gentleman has spent much of his career systematically refusing to give yes or no answers to hypothetical questions. That is the only fitting answer.

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is one of those seeking to participate in the debate.

Mr. Field: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Nothing disorderly has taken place that I know about.

Mr. Field: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is the Leader of the Opposition trying to unite his party or just make us laugh?

Mr. Speaker: Order. It does not help to make that sort of remark in the middle of a speech.

Mr. Kinnock: Everything that I have heard from the Conservative party in recent weeks shows that it has a surfeit of comedians.

The intergovernmental conferences approaching in a few weeks' time are clearly vital to Britain. The party of government is locked in civil war over the issue. That is one of the reasons for what we are hearing today. During recent weeks the Foreign Secretary and the Prime Minister have sent very different signals about the political process. We also know that during recent weeks the Chancellor and the Prime Minister have differed greatly on economic union. We can only assume that in the wake of the Prime Minister's departure there will be a degree of similarity between the views of the Foreign Secretary and the Chancellor. What is certain, however, is that a substantial body of opinion in the Tory party strongly disagrees with the Chancellor and the Foreign Secretary. That division is basic and unbridgeable.

All that Conservative Members have in common is their opposition to the social charter and the standards that it sets for youth training, social security, health and safety at work, and much else. All that unites them is their opposition to the opportunities for improvement that could be afforded to the British people by that charter. They are also against the extension of majority voting to secure greater protection for the environment.

The Labour party is for the social charter. We are for extending majority voting for proposals to improve social and environmental standards. We are for them because they are a means of gaining advantage for the British people; a means of ensuring that we are part of a community as well as part of a market.

I could not really care less what Conservative Members do to themselves and their party, but I do care about the damage that they have done, are doing and will do to the interests of our country. How can anyone have confidence in a Government whose former deputy Prime Minister admits that they have been pursuing the wrong policies for half a decade? Who can have confidence in a Government with Cabinet Ministers who in the past week have been privately telling the press that the Prime Minister is finished and minutes later in the television studio supporting her position, before going off to a private meeting to contrive a coup against her? What confidence can there be in a Government headed by anyone who has sworn allegiance to Thatcherism, as every one of the contestants in the leadership contest has? Who can have confidence in a Government split from top to bottom? If they have no confidence in one another, how can the country have confidence in them? Conservative Members on the Back Benches and on the Government Front Bench have no confidence in one another, as they have shown in everything that they have said about one another in recent weeks and everything that they have done about one another in recent weeks. They are unfit to govern and should go now.

In a democracy, there should be one fitting conclusion to today's dramatic events—a general election. Let the people decide and let Britain have a fresh chance with a Labour Government.

4.50 pm

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): It is, of course, the right and duty of Her Majesty's Opposition to challenge the position of the Government of the day. It is also their right to test the confidence of the House in the Government if they think that the circumstances warrant it. I make no complaint about that. But when the windy rhetoric of the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) has blown away, what are their real reasons for bringing this motion before the House? There were no alternative policies—just a lot of disjointed, opaque words.

It cannot be a complaint about Britain's standing in the world. That is deservedly high, not least because of our contribution to ending the cold war and to the spread of democracy through eastern Europe and the Soviet Union—achievements that were celebrated at the historic meeting in Paris from which I returned yesterday.

It cannot be the nation's finances. We are repaying debts, including the debts run up by the Labour party. It cannot be the Government's inability to carry forward their programme for the year ahead, which was announced in the Gracious Speech on 7 November. We carried that debate by a majority of 108.

The Opposition's real reason is the leadership election for the Conservative party, which is a democratic election according to rules which have been public knowledge for many years—one member, one vote. That is a far cry from the way in which the Labour party does these things. Two in every five votes for its leader are cast by the trade union block votes, which have a bigger say than Labour Members in that decision: precious little democracy there.

The real issue to be decided by my right hon. and hon. Friends is how best to build on the achievements of the 1980s, how to carry Conservative policies forward through the 1990s and how to add to three general election victories a fourth, which we shall surely win.

Eleven years ago, we rescued Britain from the parlous state to which socialism had brought it. I remind the House that, under socialism, this country had come to such a pass that one of our most able and distinguished ambassadors felt compelled to write in a famous dispatch, a copy of which found its way into *The Economist*, the following words:

> "We talk of ourselves without shame as being one of the less prosperous countries of Europe. The prognosis for the foreseeable future",

he said in 1979, was

> "discouraging".

Conservative government has changed all that. Once again, Britain stands tall in the councils of Europe and of the world, and our policies have brought unparalleled prosperity to our citizens at home.

In the past decade, we have given power back to the people on an unprecedented scale. We have given back control to people over their own lives and over their livelihood—over the decisions that matter most to them and their families. We have done it by curbing the monopoly power of trade unions to control, even to victimise, the individual worker. Labour would return us to conflict, confrontation and government by the consent of the TUC. We have done it by enabling families to own their homes, not least through the sale of 1·25 million council houses. Labour opposes our new rents-to-mortgage initiative, which will spread the benefits of ownership wider still. We have done it by giving people choice in public services—which school is right for their children, which training course is best for the school leaver, which doctor they choose to look after their health and which hospital they want for their treatment.

Labour is against spreading those freedoms and choice to all our people. It is against us giving power back to the people by privatising nationalised industries. Eleven million people now own shares, and 7·5 million people have registered an interest in buying electricity shares. Labour wants to renationalise electricity, water and British Telecom. It wants to take power back to the state and back into its own grasp— a fitful and debilitating grasp.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): The right hon. Lady says that she has given power back to the people, but more than 2 million of them are unemployed. Has she given power back to them? Inflation is 10·9 per cent. Is that giving power back to the people, compared with rates throughout the rest of Europe? Is the frittering away of £100 billion-worth of North sea oil, which no other country has had, giving power back to the people? Will she kindly explain that—and how pushing many people into cardboard boxes and taking power away from them is somehow giving power back to them?

The Prime Minister: Two million more jobs since 1979 represent a great deal more opportunity for people. Yes, 10·9 per cent. inflation is much higher than it should be, but it is a lot lower than 26·9 per cent. under the last Labour Government. Yes, we have benefited from North sea oil. The Government have made great investments abroad that will give this country an income long after North sea oil has ceased. We have provided colossal investment for future generations. Labour Members ran up debts, which we have repaid. We are providing investment for the future; we do not believe in living at the expense of the future.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): If things are as good as the Prime Minister is outlining, why are her colleagues not happy for her to continue in the job of defending that record?

The Prime Minister: These are the reasons why we shall win a fourth general election. We have been down in the polls before when we have taken difficult decisions. The essence of a good Government is that they are prepared to take difficult decisions to achieve long-term prosperity. That is what we have achieved and why we shall handsomely win the next general election.

I was speaking of the Labour party wanting to renationalise privatised industry. Four of the industries that we have privatised are in the top 10 British businesses, but at the very bottom of the list of 1,000 British businesses lie four nationalised industries. Labour's industries consume the wealth that others create and give nothing back.

Because individuals and families have more power and more choice, they have more opportunities to succeed—2 million more jobs than in 1979, better rewards for hard work, income tax down from 33p in the pound to 25p in the pound and no surcharge on savings income. Living standards are up by a third and 400,000 new businesses have been set up since 1979—more than 700 every week. There is a better future for our children, thanks to our hard work, success and enterprise. Our people are better off than ever before. The average pensioner——

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): Will the right hon. Lady give way?

The Prime Minister: If the hon. Gentleman will just listen, he might hear something that he did not know. The average pensioner now has twice as much to hand on to his children as he did 11 years ago. They are thinking about the future. This massive rise in our living standards reflects the extraordinary transformation of the private sector.

Mr. Hughes: There is no doubt that the Prime Minister, in many ways, has achieved substantial success. There is one statistic, however, that I understand is not challenged, and that is that, during her 11 years as Prime Minister, the gap between the richest 10 per cent. and the poorest 10 per cent. in this country has widened substantially. At the end of her chapter of British politics, how can she say that she can justify the fact that many people in a constituency such as mine are relatively much poorer, much less well housed and much less well provided for than they were in 1979? Surely she accepts that that is not a record that she or any Prime Minister can be proud of.

The Prime Minister: People on all levels of income are better off than they were in 1979. The hon. Gentleman is saying that he would rather that the poor were poorer, provided that the rich were less rich. That way one will never create the wealth for better social services, as we have. What a policy. Yes, he would rather have the poor poorer, provided that the rich were less rich. That is the Liberal policy.

Mr. Hughes: No.

The Prime Minister: Yes, it came out. The hon. Member did not intend it to, but it did.

The extraordinary transformation of the private sector has created the wealth for better social services and better pensions—it enables pensioners to have twice as much as they did 10 years ago to leave to their children.

We are no longer the sick man of Europe—our output and investment grew faster during the 1980s than that of any of our major competitors.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

The Prime Minister: If hon. Members would be a little patient, it would allow me to get a little further.

No longer a doubtful prospect, when American and Japanese companies invest in Europe, we are their first choice. Britain no longer has an overmanned, inefficient, backward manufacturing sector, but modern, dynamic industries.

The right hon. Gentleman referred to the level of inflation. Yes, in 1987 and 1988, the economy did expand too fast. There was too much borrowing, and inflation rose. That is why we had to take the tough, unpopular, measures to bring the growth of money supply within target. Inflation has now peaked and will soon be coming down. Inevitably, the economy has slowed, but we firmly expect growth to resume next year. For the fundamentals are right. Our industry is now enterprising. It has been modernised and restructured. In sector after sector, it is our companies which lead the world—in pharmaceuticals, in telecommunications and in aerospace. Our companies have the freedom and talent to succeed—and the will to compete.

Mr. Sillars: The Prime Minister is aware that I detest every single one of her domestic policies, and I have never hidden that fact. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Sillars: However, it is always a greater pleasure to tackle a political heavyweight opponent than a lightweight Leader of the Opposition—*[Interruption.]*—who is afraid to explain why, after a lifetime of campaigning to get rid of nuclear weapons, he is going to plant three Trident missiles in my country.

Can I take the Prime Minister back to the question of the poor getting poorer? Does she not realise—even at this point, five minutes after midnight for her—that, because of the transfer of resources from the poor to the wealthy, the poll tax was unacceptable, and that it was because of the poll tax that she has fallen?

The Prime Minister: I think that the hon. Gentleman knows that I have the same contempt for his socialist policies as the people of east Europe, who have experienced them, have for theirs. I think that I must have hit the right nail on the head when I pointed out that the logic of those policies is that they would rather the poor were poorer. Once they start to talk about the gap, they would rather that the gap were that—*[indicating]*—down here, not this—*[indicating]*—but that—*[indicating]*. So long as the gap is smaller, they would rather have the poor poorer. One does not create wealth and opportunity that way. One does not create a property-owning democracy that way.

Can I now get back to the subject of industry and an industrial policy from which Scotland has benefited so much, and from which it could never have benefited under the Government that the hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Sillars) used to support, and under the political policy that he espouses now?

Yes, our companies have the freedom and talent to succeed, and the will to compete. And compete we must. Our competitors will not be taking a break. There must be no hankering after soft options and no going back to the disastrous economic policies of Labour Governments. No amount of distance lends enchantment to the lean years of Labour, which gave us the lowest growth rate in Europe, the highest strike record and, for the average family, virtually no increase in take-home pay. Labour's policies are a vote of no confidence in the ability of British people to manage their own affairs. We have that confidence. Confidence in freedom and confidence in enterprise. That is what divides Conservatives from socialists.

Our stewardship of the public finances has been better than that of any Government for nearly 50 years. It has enabled us to repay debt and cut taxes. The resulting success of the private sector has generated the wealth and revenues which pay for better social services—to double the amount being spent to help the disabled, to give extra help to war widows, and vastly to increase spending on the national health service. More than 1 million more patients are being treated each year and there are 8,000 more doctors and 53,000 more nurses to treat them.

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South) *rose*——

The Prime Minister: That is the record of eleven and a half years of Conservative Government and Conservative principles. All these are grounds for congratulation, not censure, least of all from the Leader of the Opposition, who has no alternative policies.

Mr. Ashley *rose*——

The Prime Minister: I shall give way to the right hon. Gentleman, but then I should like to move on to say something about Europe, because what the Leader of the Opposition said about it was, to say the least, opaque.

Mr. Ashley: The Prime Minister mentioned disabled people, and as she is always anxious to be honest with the House, would she care to give a wider perspective about what has happened to disabled people under her Government? Would she care to confirm the official figures, which show that, in the first 10 years of her reign, average male earnings rose by 20 per cent. in real terms, whereas benefits for disabled people in that period rose 1 per cent. in real terms? How well did disabled people do out of that?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman is very selective indeed. He knows full well that, in the past 11 years, we have spent twice as much on the disabled, over and above inflation—not twice as much in cash terms, but twice as much in terms of what the benefits will buy—especially in the mobility allowance and the Motability scheme. This has been quite outstanding and has been brought about because, under our policies, we have been able to create the wealth which created the resources to do that, among other things.

During the past 11 years, this Government have had a clear and unwavering vision of the future of Europe and Britain's role in it. It is a vision which stems from our deep-seated attachment to parliamentary democracy and commitment to economic liberty, enterprise, competition and a free market economy. No Government in Europe have fought more resolutely against subsidies, state aids to industry and protectionism; unnecessary regulation and bureaucracy and increasing unaccountable central power at the expense of national Parliaments. No Governments have fought more against that in Europe than we have.

We have fought attempts to put new burdens and constraints on industry, such as the social charter which would take away jobs, in particular part-time jobs. For us part of the purpose of the Community is to demolish trade barriers and eliminate unfair subsidies, so that we can all benefit from a great expansion of trade both within Europe and with the outside world.

The fact is that Britain has done more to shape the Community over the past 11 years than any other member state. Britain is leading the reform of the common agricultural policy, getting surpluses down, putting a ceiling on agricultural spending. We have been the driving force towards the single market which, when it is completed, will be the most significant advance in the Community since the treaty of Rome itself. We have done more than any other Government to resist protectionism, keep Europe's market open to trade with the rest of the world, and make a success of the GATT negotiations.

We have worked for our vision of a Europe which is free and open to the rest of the world, and above all to the countries of eastern Europe as they emerge from the shadows of socialism. It would not help them if Europe became a tight-knit little club, tied up in regulations and restrictions. They deserve a Europe where there is room for their rediscovered sense of nationhood and a place to decide their own destiny after decades of repression.

With all this, we have never hesitated to stand up for Britain's interests. The people of Britain want a fair deal in Europe, particularly over our budget contribution. We

have got back nearly £10 billion which would otherwise have been paid over to the EC under the arrangements negotiated by the Labour party when it was in power.

Indeed, what sort of vision does the Labour party have? None, according to the Leader of the Opposition. Labour Members want a Europe of subsidies, a Europe of socialist restrictions, a Europe of protectionism. They want it because that is how they would like to run—or is it ruin? —this country.

Every time that we have stood up and fought for Britain and British interests, Labour Front Bench spokesmen have carped, criticised and moaned. On the central issues of Europe's future, they will not tell us where they stand. Do they want a single currency? The right hon. Gentleman does not even know what it means, so how can he know? —*[Laughter.]*

Mr. Kinnock: It is a hypothetical question.

The Prime Minister: Absolute nonsense. It is appalling. He says that it is a hypothetical question. It will not be a hypothetical question. Someone must go to Europe and argue knowing what it means.

Are Labour Members prepared to defend the rights of this United Kingdom Parliament? No, for all that the right hon. Gentleman said. For them, it is all compromise, "sweep it under the carpet", "leave it for another day", and "it might sort itself out", in the hope that the people of Britain will not notice what is happening to them, and how the powers would gradually slip away.

The Government will continue to take a positive and constructive approach to the future of Europe. We welcome economic and monetary co-operation: indeed, no other member state has gone further than Britain in tabling proposals for the next stage, including the hard ecu. But our proposals would work with the market and give people and Governments real choice.

We want the Community to move forward as twelve: and from my talks in Paris with other European leaders over the past few days, I am convinced that that is their aim too. Europe is strongest when it grows through willing co-operation and practical measures, not compulsion or bureaucratic dreams.

Mr. Alan Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): Will the Prime Minister tell us whether she intends to continue her personal fight against a single currency and an independent central bank when she leaves office?

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): No. She is going to be the governor. *[Laughter.]*

The Prime Minister: What a good idea. I had not thought of that. But if I were, there would be no European central bank accountable to no one, least of all national Parliaments. The point of that kind of Europe with a central bank is no democracy, taking powers away from every single Parliament, and having a single currency, a monetary policy and interest rates which take all political power away from us. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson) said in his first speech after the proposal for a single currency was made, a single currency is about the politics of Europe, it is about a federal Europe by the back door. So I shall consider the proposal of the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner). Now where were we? I am enjoying this.

Mr. Michael Carttiss (Great Yarmouth): Cancel it. You can wipe the floor with these people.

The Prime Minister: Yes, indeed—I was talking about Europe and the socialist ideal of Europe. Not for us the corporatism, socialism and central control. We leave those to the Opposition. Ours is a larger vision of a Community whose member states co-operate with one another more and more closely to the benefit of all.

Are we then to be censured for standing up for a free and open Britain in a free and open Europe? No. Our policies are in tune with the deepest instincts of the British people. We shall win the censure motion, so we shall not be censured for what is thoroughly right.

Under our leadership, Britain has been just as influential in shaping the wider Europe and the relations between East and West. Ten years ago, the eastern part of Europe lay under totalitarian rule, its people knowing neither rights nor liberties. Today, we have a Europe in which democracy, the rule of law and basic human rights are spreading ever more widely, where the threat to our security from the overwhelming conventional forces of the Warsaw pact has been removed: where the Berlin wall has been torn down and the cold war is at an end.

These immense changes did not come about by chance. They have been achieved by strength and resolution in defence, and by a refusal ever to be intimidated. No one in eastern Europe believes that their countries would be free had it not been for those western Governments who were prepared to defend liberty, and who kept alive their hope that one day east Europe too would enjoy freedom.

But it was no thanks to the Labour party, or to the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament of which the right hon. Gentleman is still a member. It is this Government who kept the nuclear weapons which ensured that we could never be blackmailed or threatened. When Brezhnev deployed the SS20s, Britain deployed the cruise missiles and was the first to do so. And all these things were done in the teeth of the opposition of the hon. Gentlemen opposite—and their ladies. *[Laughter.]* The SS20s could never have been negotiated away without the bargaining strength which cruise and Pershing gave to the west.

Should we be censured for our strength? Or should the Labour party be censured for its weakness? I have no doubt that the people of Britain will willingly entrust Britain's security in future to a Conservative Government who defend them, rather than to socialists who put expediency before principle.

Sir Eldon Griffiths (Bury St. Edmunds): May I offer my right hon. Friend one measurement of the immense international respect and affection that she enjoys as a result of her policies of peace through strength? An opinion poll published on the west coast of America last month—*[Laughter.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. This takes up a great deal of time. The hon. Gentleman is seeking to participate in the debate. Will he please ask a question?

Sir Eldon Griffiths: The figures are Gorbachev 74 per cent., Bush 75 per cent. and Thatcher 94 per cent.

The Prime Minister: I am sure that they were quite right, too.

[The Prime Minister]

I wish to say a word or two about the situation in the Gulf, because it will dominate politics until the matter is resolved. It is principle which is at stake, as well as the rule of international law.

In my discussions with other Heads of Government at the CSCE summit in Paris, I found a unanimous and impressive determination that Iraq's aggression must not succeed. The resolutions of the United Nations must be implemented in full. That is the peaceful option, Mr. Speaker, and it is there to be taken, if Saddam Hussein so chooses. There was also a widespread recognition among my colleagues in Paris that the time was fast approaching when the world community would have to take more decisive action to uphold international law and compel Saddam Hussein to leave Kuwait.

No one can doubt the dangers which lie ahead. Saddam Hussein has many times shown his contempt for human life, not least for the lives of his own people. He has large armed forces. They are equipped with peculiarly evil weapons, both chemical and biological.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Will the Prime Minister give way?

The Prime Minister: No, not now.

Twice in my time as Prime Minister we have had to send our forces across the world to defend a small country against ruthless aggression: first to our own people in the Falklands and now to the borders of Kuwait. To those who have never had to take such decisions, I say that they are taken with a heavy heart and in the knowledge of the manifold dangers, but with tremendous pride in the professionalism and courage of our armed forces.

There is something else which one feels. That is a sense of this country's destiny: the centuries of history and experience which ensure that, when principles have to be defended, when good has to be upheld and when evil has to be overcome, Britain will take up arms. It is because we on this side have never flinched from difficult decisions that this House and this country can have confidence in this Government today.

Mr. Speaker: Before I call hon. Members to speak in this important debate, I must say that I have no authority to limit speeches in a debate of this sort, nor would it be right to do so. Nevertheless, this is a day on which right hon. and hon. Members should exercise self-restraint. I ask hon. Members who are not remaining to leave quietly, please.

5.24 pm

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): It is impossible to follow the Prime Minister without soberly reflecting for a moment that we have just heard what is probably the last of her important and considerable speeches from the Government Dispatch Box. It was a bravura performance of the sort which she has made her own. I cannot with honesty say that I shall miss it, but I shall certainly remember it and, as time intervenes, remember it with ever greater affection.

We have just heard a catalogue of the Prime Minister's achievements and to some extent a political will and testament to her party. I must warn whoever is successful in the leadership election to watch out for that one on the Back Benches. Whatever the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) did to her, she will powerful voice in months to come. We shall be inter to see how much that voice will be used to unite her or, on the issue of Europe, to divide it.

It is impossible to have lived through last week wi feeling that one is participating in a moment of hi

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Ashdown: If the hon. Gentleman will let m further into my speech, I shall happily conside intervention later.

In the past week we have seen the end of one era end of a decade to which the Prime Minister has in senses given her name—and the beginning of an What struck me as remarkable about the two speeche that neither was about the future and both were abo past. Both were about what has happened in the decade. If there is a reason to have a lack of confide this Government it is much more that they ar addressing the real agenda of the 1990s—a new age opening up—than their terrible failures in the past.

I recognise that the Prime Minister's decision toda a difficult one. She took it in a way which was right f remarkable reputation, right for her party's unity and for the country. We can all understand what she through. She is a fighter and must have been conside tempted to stay on and battle it out—to go down li Fighting Temeraire with all guns blazing. That undoubtedly be a noble end for a great captain, bu best calculated to encourage enthusiasm in the crew, have seen during the past week.

The Prime Minister has opened the way for th politics that Britain so badly needs. It is impossible the moment pass without having the smallest tin sadness about the end of an era. I do not wa underestimate her considerable achievements. I have agreed with her politics. I have always felt that th bad and wrong for Britain. I have never agreed wi style. I have not denied—nor can we deny—some achievements or the courage and skill with which sh done her job. Indeed, she has achievements.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): What achieven Name one.

Mr. Ashdown: The Prime Minister's pre-em achievement, which is not welcome to Labour Mem and the one for which she will be remembered, democratisation of the trade union movement.

In 1979 we debated whether Britain would be run trade unions or the elected Government of the day hard to remember that now. The Prime Minister, credit, answered that challenge. [HON. MEMBERS: "C with it."] I hear Opposition Members baying behin no doubt they do not like to hear that. It is impo however, to mark up what the Prime Minister has She is right to say that she has given this cou standing abroad that it did not have in the 1970s. Th hon. Lady has also given us some sense of the va sound money, which is important. She has also highl the importance of the market in our economy.

Sir Jim Spicer (Dorset, West): Will the right Gentleman say just a word of thanks to the Prime M on behalf of his constituents and mine who work—

Mr. Cryer: The right hon. Gentleman is grovelling anyway.

Sir Jim Spicer: Will you keep quiet? *[Interruption.]* I apologise, Mr. Speaker. The right hon. Gentleman should give a word of thanks to the Prime Minister for all that she has done to change the climate for Westland in the past 10 years. Those changes made it possible to retain jobs which otherwise would have been lost.

Mr. Ashdown: Of course, I pay that tribute, but I should have thought that Westland was not a subject that the Prime Minister would necessarily want to be brought up today. It is important to remember, however, that all the indecision about Westland cost my constituency and the hon. Gentleman's constituency 1,000 jobs. I pay a two-edged compliment.

I believe that the Prime Minister can claim to have been the spirit of the 1980s. The failure of the right hon. Lady and her party is that they are unable to address what is needed for Britain in the 1990s.

The censure motion was a flat-footed blunder on the part of the Labour party——

Mr. Cryer: The right hon. Gentleman put down a motion three weeks ago. What was clever about that?

Mr. Ashdown: Exactly so. If the Labour party had supported that motion or tabled one on Europe, it would have divided the Government. We well know that the Labour party could not table a motion on Europe for reasons that became patently obvious when the Leader of the Opposition spoke. The Labour party is profoundly divided on Europe—as divided as the Government are.

The Labour party tabled the motion to support the Prime Minister—what strange nonsense.

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Ashdown: If that is true—Opposition Members have just said it—the Labour party's last-ditch attempt to save the Prime Minister has signally failed. The truth of the matter is that the Labour party is now left without a policy. It intended to present to Britain the simple message, "Please vote for us because we are the 'Not the Mrs. Thatcher party'." That is the single policy of the Labour party.

Mr. Wareing *rose——*

Mr. Ashdown: The Labour party's fox has been shot. It must now address the agenda of the future and the policies it has so far ignored.

Mr. Wareing *rose——*

Mr. Ashdown: The hon. Gentleman must accept that if I have not given way to him by now, I do not intend to.

It is not without significance that the Leader of the Opposition's entire speech was concentrated on attacking the Government. That is perfectly reasonable in a censure motion, but he said nothing about the poll tax, Europe, the economy or anything else relating to Labour party policy.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Ashdown: No.

Mrs. Mahon *rose——*

Mr. Wareing *rose——*

Mr. Speaker: Order. If the right hon. Gentleman does not give way, the hon. Lady and other hon. Gentlemen must resume their seats. The right hon. Gentleman has already said that he does not intend to give way.

Mr. Ashdown: No doubt it will be interesting to all observers of this debate to note that the hooligans on this side of the House——

Mr. Wareing: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The right hon. Gentleman's party voted for the Government on the previous censure motion, but that Government are now in trouble.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that that is a debating point.

Mr. Wareing: No, it is not. The right hon. Gentleman referred to my hon. Friend the Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) and me as hooligans. Is that a party expression?

Mr. Speaker: I did not hear it, but if the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends persist in interrupting, things are sometimes said that are not always meant. If the hon. Gentleman resumed his seat, he might have some chance to take part in the debate.

Mr. Ashdown: The motion is not one of no confidence in the Prime Minister—we do not need one because Conservative Members have kindly provided us with one in duplicate. It is, however, a motion of no confidence in the Government. The fundamental reason why we shall vote for this motion—[HON. MEMBERS: "Ah!"] Oh yes. Given that the Labour party has followed, three weeks late, what we did, we shall naturally vote for the motion. The reason is simple: the Government are now terminally divided. They are divided on all the key issues that confront Britain. The losers are not the right hon. Gentlemen who are candidates for the leadership of the Conservative party—one will win and no doubt two will lose. [HON. MEMBERS: "Brilliant!"] The real losers are the people of Britain because the Government are divided on Europe, the poll tax and all the other key issues before us.

The country is passing through a deep economic recession, but the Government are in crisis. In the future this country must decide on Europe—that decision is as important as any of those reached since the second world war—but the Government are divided on that crucial matter. As a consequence, the ordinary people will have to pay higher mortgages for longer, the recession will go on for longer, more jobs will be lost and the poll tax will go on for longer. Those facts mean that the Government are no longer fit to govern. No future leader of the Conservative party will be able to paper over those deep cracks—mortal divisions—that divide that party.

The right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine), who is not in the Chamber, has identified four of the five key areas in which the Government have failed. He ignored the environment, however, which is vital. Britain must have a political party that is prepared to address what needs to be done to change our lifestyle so as to save our environment. Unless that happens we shall fail the crucial test that lies ahead in the last decade of the century. The right hon. Member for Henley has asked the questions, but, in so far as he has provided the answers,

[Mr. Ashdown]

they are answers upon which his party is divided. The Liberal Democrats ask many of the same questions, but we provide the answers and our party is united on them.

The right hon. Member for Henley rightly raised the issue of the poll tax. He identifies the poll tax as a major problem for the Government, but he does not propose any alternative. He retreats to the old refuge of politicians who do not have an answer, which is to call for a review.

We in the House will not forget that the right hon. Gentleman has never voted against the poll tax. Indeed, the people of Scotland will not forget that he voted for it. When the right hon. Member for Henley was asked why he voted for the poll tax in Scotland, he gave the curious answer that he thought the Scottish people were in favour of it. Any candidate for the premiership of Britain who is so out of touch with the people does not deserve the position.

We in my party are united on what must happen to the poll tax. It should be replaced by a local income tax. We need a sensible, fair, just, cheap, efficient and easy-to-raise tax, just as accountable for local government as the accountability that is enjoyed by the Prime Minister.

Ms. Dawn Primarolo (Bristol, South): Does the right hon. Gentleman believe that our present national taxation system is fair? If not, why does he propose that local authority taxes should be levied in the same way?

Mr. Ashdown: The national taxation system is a hell of a lot fairer than the poll tax. Also, that system has lasted through the lifetime of a number of Labour Governments, and it is for the Government of the day to change it in any way they wish to make it fair—if the hon. Lady thinks that it is not fair.

I come to the issue of Europe——

Mr. Cryer *rose*——

Mr. Ashdown: I will give way to the hon. Gentleman, but I make it clear that it is the last time that I shall give way. I do not wish to prolong my speech, because many other hon. Members wish to take part in the debate.

Mr. Cryer: The right hon. Gentleman gave way on precisely the same point in a previous speech. Others make the same error when talking about Europe. I assume that he is talking about the European Economic Community. I should be grateful if the right hon. Gentleman would not assume the arrogant attitude that Europe is covered by the EEC, when it is only a tiny proportion of western Europe.

Mr. Ashdown: The hon. Gentleman intervened at the point when I had simply used the word "Europe". He is out of date, for there is no such thing as the European Economic Community. It is now the European Community, so perhaps he should get his terminology right.

I come to the question of Europe and the European Community. The right hon. Member for Henley is right to say that it is a key issue, for the Government and the nation, but his policy—he has stated it publicly—is not to change the Prime Minister's policy but to argue it better. We would simply bring the problem back to the House. We would remain left behind, isolated and on the outer ring of a two-speed Europe.

My party is not divided on the issue of Europ Conservative and Labour parties are divided. We confused on it. We know precisely where we *[Interruption.]*—for we are in favour of E monetary union, of a central bank for Europe, of integration and of being part of the mainstream of moving towards European unity. That is our cl united position.

The next matter raised by the right hon. Men Henley was the economy, and he was right to say economic policies of the Government have not su There is evidence all around us of that. But the ri Gentleman, putting himself forward for the leade the Conservative party, proposes that we should r a 1970s dirigisme which, frankly, failed.

The Prime Minister is right to draw a parallel the economic proposals of the right hon. Men Henley and those of the Labour Shadow Ch because they have a great deal of similarity. W party know and understand the importance of the and of competition, but we also know and understa are united on, the role of Government i circumstances.

We say that the Government's role is to monopolies; to promote real competition, not t competition promoted by the present Governmen privatisation of the utilities; and to let the powe market have its effect. But the Government of the d a duty to invest where the market will not invest, e in education and training. That is why we say tha the pre-eminent role of the economic policies of Government. We are clear and united on that iss

The right hon. Member for Henley is right to the fact that there is a constitutional problem with in which the Prime Minister has handled her off right for him to point out that the Prime Minister many would say, and I would agree with overstepped the conventions of her office in the years.

The difference between us is that the right hon. for Henley would replace the Prime Minister with We would replace the system. That is the fund difference because we say that no Prime Minister— right hon. Member for Henley nor any of th contenders, and certainly not the leader of the party—should enjoy the powers that the presen Minister has created for that office. It is not heal democracy.

What separates my party from any other Parliament is that we do not want to inherit that o want to change it. We want for our country a constitution which does not allow the Prime Mi any other politician to overstep the bounds of thei Marching hand in hand with that constitution, w Bill of Rights that will enshrine the inalienable free every citizen in a way that cannot be tampered wit Prime Minister, by the bureaucrats, by trade unio big business. That is the way to begin to ta fundamental constitutional issues.

On the constitutional side, my party is alon House, among the major parties, in saying that th be a reform of the voting system. We must hav voting system in Britain——

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): The Nationalists want the same.

Mr. Ashdown: I accept that the Scottish Nationalists adduce the same argument. The people of Britain are entitled to ask how a 55 per cent. vote is not sufficient to elect a Conservative leader, when a 40 per cent. vote is sufficient to elect a whole Government.

When, in due course, as I predict will happen, the Conservatives go to a third ballot and must use proportional representation with a single transferable vote, we shall be entitled to ask the new Prime Minister who will have been elected by that mechanism why he is prepared for himself to be elected by that means but denies it to the people of Britain. We cannot have a stable Government unless we are prepared to have a reformed and fair voting system.

There is a sense that we are passing through a period of change. The Liberal Democrats now stand united on the agenda for the 1990s, the agenda to which other parties will have to come. We are united, while the two other main parties are divided. The great moment of change has arrived. The difference between us is that they fear change while we welcome it.

I say to the new leader of the Conservative party, whoever he may be, that it will not be sufficient for him simply to be elected by a caucus of Conservative Members of Parliament in secret in a Committee Room of the House of Commons. If he is to put the good of his country before the good of his party, he must do what must be done, and that is to seek the mandate of the British people in a general election. Until that happens, he will not be able to lead the Conservative party or the Government.

5.48 pm

Mr. Cranley Onslow (Woking): You and I were elected to the House on the same day, Mr. Speaker, and I cannot presume to speak for you, but this is the saddest day of my political life. Nor can I pretend that I find it easy to speak without emotion. I hope that you and the House will forgive me for that.

I know that many people outside the House heard the news of the resignation of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister with the greatest sorrow, as I did—and with anger, too, because of the events which brought it about. Those emotions are real and will be slow to fade.

In her truly remarkable speech today and by her answers at Question Time, my right hon. Friend reminded us once again of those qualities in herself which must not be obscured by tears of rage. Above all, she showed us her enormous courage, her self-possession and her dignity. In that, she should have taken the House back to the statement that she made here earlier this week and from which I shall quote. In her report on the Paris summit, my right hon. Friend told the House, among other things, that

"The steady resolve of the United Kingdom and the United States to maintain strong defence during the years when the Warsaw pact represented a direct challenge to our way of life, and our refusal to give way to military threats, was crucial in securing this excellent agreement . . . I believe that this summit was an historic gathering. It marked the end of the cold war in Europe and the triumph of democracy, freedom and the rule of law . . .

Britain has throughout been in the forefront of those who supported the struggle for human rights in those dark days".

My right hon. Friend concluded:

"I believe that the outcome of the summit is one of which this Government, this House and this country can be proud." —[*Official Report*, 21 November 1990; Vol. 181, c.292.]

As one who remembers the start of the cold war, I say to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister how much we all know that it was her steady resolve, her refusal to g way and her support for the struggle for human rights th made the outcome of that summit something of which can be proud. And there are so many other things in wh my right hon. Friend can take pride.

I should like to quote also from the statement that Lord Chancellor made this morning on behalf of the wh Cabinet, in which he said to my right hon. Friend Prime Minister:

"You have served as Leader of the Conservative Party nearly 16 years and as Prime Minister for the past 11 yea the longest serving Prime Minister this century. You led Government through a time of severe economic difficulty the early years of the decade to a period of sustained econo growth unparalleled since the Second World War. Yo fortitude sustained the effort to recover the Falkland Islan and showed a resolve which many thought had been lost Britain . . .

Your place in our country's history is already assured We thank you most warmly for your leadership and we exte to both you and your husband, who has supported you marvellously, all our best wishes for the future."

Those words should be recorded and reaffirmed in House.

When I proposed you for re-election to the Chair at start of this Parliament, Mr. Speaker, it never occurred me that one of the great advantages of your high office w that you did not need to know anything about the rules the election of the leader of the Conservative party. Oth may realise the constraints under which they have plac me. This means that I can say little about the events of coming week—much as I might like to speak out—save say that I am confident that my colleagues can elect successor who will respond to the challenges which face people of this country in the years ahead and that he w prove worthy of the support of all my colleagues. That believe, is the one sure way in which we can work togeth towards the twin objectives that my right hon. Friend Prime Minister set us today—the unity of this party a victory in a general election.

5.53 pm

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau Gwent): I hope that Prime Minister will not depart immediately. I know th she has many other pressing engagements. She has to list to those who will follow her, which I am sure must be great strain. If she has to go, then she must, but I w about to comment on her speech. There seemed to be great mystery about it. If her record and that of Government is as plain and as good as she claimed, and the figures uphold all the doctrines that she has announc and all the achievements that she listed, if it is all so pla and so obvious, I cannot understand why the Pri Minister did not respond to the speech of my right ho Friend the Leader of the Opposition and call a gene election. If the evidence is so clear, so plain, so obvious a so comprehensive, surely she should be the one to ta those great accomplishments to the British public a persuade them. So something else must have occurre One possibility is that the achievements are perhaps not great as the right hon. Lady has claimed. Another is th others think that they can present the case better than s can. Either way, it does not seem as though the right ho Lady is upholding the case which she put to the Hou

The truth is that, as so often, the right hon. Lady h failed to face the reality of what is happening in t country. She does not seem to understand what h happened in so many constituencies, including my ow

[Mr. Michael Foot]

and many others, in the past 10 years. She does not seem to understand the real consequences of so many of her policies. Because of the way in which she has presented the case to date, it is not only Opposition Members and my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition who are protesting about what she has done—some leading Conservative Members are doing so as well. I notice that the right hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson), the former Chancellor of the Exchequer, is in his place. I shall come to him in a moment. I am sorry that the candidates are not present. The right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) might have turned up for the whole debate. Not that he comes to our debates often, of course—when he closed the Devonport dockyard, he did not trouble to come to the House himself but sent one of his underlings. That is the way in which the right hon. Gentleman has often treated the House of Commons and, so far as I can see, his party as well.

I listened to the funeral oration given by the right hon. Member for Henley this morning when he commented on the announcement from No. 10 Downing street. That must have been the first assassination scene in which the envious Casca tried to pass himself off as Mark Antony. If it was such a good performance—we all know that the right hon. Gentleman often repeats himself—perhaps he should have come along to the House to join in and to give us that delight on this occasion.

We have some recollections of the right hon. Gentleman. Some people think that some of us object to him because of the way in which he waved the Mace. I think that it is the best thing that he has done. By the way, he apologised for that and I thought that he might be happy to proffer an apology again.

The right hon. Member for Henley has recently sought to make some capital out of the poll tax, although he has not yet apologised to the Scots for voting to impose the poll tax on them. Apparently, he says that he was told that the people of Scotland were in favour of it. However, he did not raise the matter when he went up there. Again, I am sorry that the right hon. Gentleman has not graced us with his presence. We know that he likes to listen to the Prime Minister, but we would have valued his evidence and presence now.

The charge that the right hon. Member for Henley has made against the Prime Minister over many years in which, at one stage, he was supported by the right hon. Member for Blaby, who is present, is a serious charge and one of which the House should take some cognition. The charge is that over a long period—the right hon. Member for Henley would say over five years—the Prime Minister was guilty of refusing to sustain proper collective Cabinet responsibility. I should have preferred to say this to the right hon. Lady's face rather than behind her back, but that is not my fault. Some of us made that accusation on earlier occasions because we thought that that was her nature. One of the reasons why we became involved in the Falklands war was that the right hon. Lady refused proper collective Cabinet responsibility to settle those issues, and there have been numerous other examples of such refusal.

The right hon. Member for Henley was so outraged by the right hon. Lady's refusal to follow the normal Cabinet system that he resigned from the Government. Her nature was confirmed again the other day by no less a person than the deputy Prime Minister, who had been Government for 10 years and who claimed that persisted in such action throughout that time. hon. Member for Blaby resigned for the same rea He said that he thought it wrong that the Prime of this country should take advice from someon the Cabinet on major matters of economic pol refusing to take proper advice from her Cabinet. told the other day that so serious was the problem right hon. Member for Blaby and the deput Minister went to the Prime Minister three or f ago, put a pistol to her head and told her th persisted in refusing to abide by proper collective responsibility, they would resign. Only by that th the Prime Minister brought to heel on that occa

I must tell supporters of the right hon. Me Henley that if he thought for five years Government was being conducted in a manner Cabinet responsibility was breached persiste quoted in his support the right hon. Member for E the deputy Prime Minister—how was he able to g down the country, recalling how he had been t Cabinet, saying that he could not imagine circums which he would ever stand for election against t Minister? Conservative associations through country have been subjected to a gross deception. have to worry about that, but some of the public overheard what the right hon. Gentleman said. Pe wanted the country to believe what he said.

When I heard the sophistical lamentations of hon. Member for Henley this morning, I found i suppress my outrage at his bursting hypocrisy, bu had overcome that I was reminded of the saying o —"Trimmer" Halifax, not the Halifax who used of the mischievous leaders of the Conservativ Halifax the trimmer was a much more eminent Leader of the House of Commons in years gon said that a known liar should be outlawed in a Government. I hope that Conservative voters in th of Commons will think about that when they com

The Opposition agree with another charge been laid against the Prime Minister by the ri Member for Henley and others. It was heard in it and strongest form—I and many of my hon. remember the speech vividly—from the rig Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath). of her conduct over a whole series of matters commenting on the relationship between 10 D street, Bernard Ingham and the Murdoch press. hon. Gentleman, were he here, could confirm wh He said that the relations between 10 Downing s which he meant the Prime Minister, and the ri millionaire press baron, Murdoch, and Bernard who was carrying on these machinations, was c and that is what it was, and so it has been throu is one of the reasons why the Prime Minister brought down. She substituted for proper Cabinet Government the operations of her Cabinet.

Previous Prime Ministers and better Prime M than the present one have been guilty of this, to George was charged with having a kitchen Cabine thrown out by the 1922 Committee almost as br the right hon. Lady has been. At least there was a to throw him out. He was thrown out bec Conservative party of the day was not prepared t

with a kitchen Cabinet instead of proper Cabinet responsibility. Yet the right hon. Lady has been doing the same thing: in each succeeding crisis, instead of taking the matter to the Cabinet and discussing it there, she has taken it to her kitchen Cabinet. Had she behaved otherwise, she might have saved herself some catastrophes. Her kitchen Cabinet has had exorbitant, dangerous powers during all these years. That is one reason why she has fallen.

When first I heard that the right hon. Lady was to come here and make her speech I was reminded of the occasion —perhaps I am the only person who remembers it—when, from the Press Gallery, I heard a speech by a previous Conservative leader who came here to try to defend his record. I refer to Neville Chamberlain in the famous Norway debate. There were many likenesses between him and the present Prime Minister. He, too, had a huge Tory majority behind him and thought that he could do anything. He, too, thought that he could ignore pressures. He, too, had his kitchen Cabinet advising him so much more wisely than the Foreign Office. And by such methods he brought this country near to utter destruction.

No one who witnessed that debate can ever forget it. Chamberlain still thought that he could get away with it. The Whips Department set up the debate for him; they still had support for the Chamberlain policy, they thought, and he came and appealed for support from his friends. It was when he made his appeal that the outrage of others—especially Lloyd George, who spoke from the Opposition Front Bench—exploded. The whole wretched Chamberlain Government, who thought that with their huge Tory majority they could do anything, were swept away after the motion moved by the leader of the Labour party of the time, and a decent Government were installed and saved the country after the most critical moment in about 1,000 years. Chamberlain's sense of rectitude, the feeling that he was always right and that nobody else was, and that he had to be listened to, closely resembles the way in which the present Prime Minister has sought to conduct the affairs of the country over the past 10 years. It is for the way she has done it, as well as for what she has done, that she will not be forgiven by my constituents. Again, I would prefer to say that to the right hon. Lady's face rather than behind her back.

The story that there has been a wonderful increase in our people's standard of living and that each section of the new community has been properly treated and has had its position improved is a lie—a lie of which the right hon. Lady constantly persuades herself. I do not imagine for a moment that she does not believe her own absurd statistics. Of course she does—that is one of the problems, and why she has had to be removed in this fashion. I give the right hon. Lady credit for the dignity with which she has stood down, but it would have been better still if she had the courage to say, here and now, "The only people entitled to judge my record are the British people, and not another hour will elapse before they get that chance."

6.10 pm

Mr. Nicholas Ridley (Cirencester and Tewkesbury): I shall shortly deal with the speech by the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot), but I should first like to thank the Leader of the Opposition for one thing only. I thank him for giving us in this debate the opportunity to pay tribute to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. The three Opposition speeches that we have heard so far were disgraceful and shameful in the return to party doctrine. The hon. Members who delivered them were unrepentant and unable to recognise that this an historic and sad moment in the history of our country

I pay tribute to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister for her courage, stamina and determination over the last eleven and a half years. Her speech today and her answers to parliamentary questions showed a fortitude and strength which I defy any other right hon. or hon. Member to show in similar circumstances. I pay tribute to her for her work in flying back and forth across the world and staying up late at night to assist this country, sometimes limiting herself to three hours sleep a night. I admire her resolution to fight for her beliefs, however long the odds against her.

The right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent spoke about Cabinet responsibility. The two examples that he cited fit ill with his case. He talked about the resignation of my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine). I was present at that Cabinet meeting, and the opinion was 20:1 against my right hon. Friend. Now, who is it who does not accept Cabinet government?

That was part of the foundation of the flimsy case presented by the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent. He spoke about the event revealed by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Surrey, East (Sir G. Howe), when he and my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson) apparently formed up on the Prime Minister and said that they would resign if a certain policy was not adopted. That, again, was the right hon. Gentleman's only evidence for his charge.

I, too, was a member of the Cabinet at that time, and I do not remember my two right hon. Friends coming before the Cabinet and saying what we should do. They never cleared their point of view with their colleagues, and never ever raised it in Cabinet. They tried to fight my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister: it was not the other way round. That must be recorded, because it is the truth about that matter. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has never failed to consult colleagues whose inputs to Cabinet were right, and this myth about her seeking to govern from outside the Cabinet is promoted by those who could not get their way in Cabinet.

We should go further in paying tribute to my right hon. Friend. We should remember her remarkable loyalty and generosity of spirit to people who were ill or unfortunate. We should remember the time that she took to look after people who had suffered misfortune, her support for colleagues when they were in trouble or going through a rough patch, and her ability to forgive. *[Interruption.]* I know that the Opposition do not like that, but I shall not use this occasion to attack them, because they are not worthy of it. I am trying to use it to support my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister.

Lastly, we must remember her integrity. She could not say what she did not believe. She hated fudging. She put her purpose above her personal interest and never said or did a mean thing. It was because of those qualities that she achieved so much. She transformed this nation's economy and spread wealth both wider and more evenly geographically over the nation. She improved the public services, because we have earned the wealth to pay for that, and she increased the standard of living of the average person in Britain by 35 per cent. Those are great achievements.

[Mr. Nicholas Ridley]

On the political front, my right hon. and hon. Friends know that she won three general elections in a row and gave us eleven and a half socialist-free years. She never lost an election. Over the years, she exhibited a resolute defence of this country's interests, and we pay tribute to her efforts to make sure that the Community did not become a centralised, closed, exclusive club but moved towards wider membership and freer trade, thus allowing it to be a group of co-operating member states rather than a federal Europe. That is the sort of Community that the vast majority of hon. Members want. It was the Prime Minister who pushed the Community further in that direction than any other European statesman.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): The right hon. Gentleman would not expect me to agree with the part of his speech that he has just concluded. It is quite clear from experience that what he says about centralisation in the European Community is just not true. Does he not agree that the terms, implications and practice of the Single European Act treaty, which did much more than even those who closely examined it realised, have taken away from the House, by a majority vote in the Council of Ministers, enormous areas of legislation? The right hon. Gentleman, many of his hon. Friends, perhaps even the Prime Minister, and many Opposition Members did not understand that. What the right hon. Gentleman has just claimed is, alas, untrue.

Mr. Ridley: I do not agree with the hon. Gentleman, because I am not anti-Community or anti-European per se. I believe that it is necessary to have a free trading area and the central powers to insist on fair and free trading inside that area. I do not see anything wrong with that. However, that is where I stop, and perhaps in that way the hon. Gentleman and I are in the same company.

On the international scene, my right hon. Friend has played no small part in ending the Russian threat, freeing the countries of east Europe, maintaining the Atlantic alliance and bringing continuing peace to the world. How did we on the Government Benches reward her? The very day that she finished the cold war in Europe, we started the hot war here.

I deeply regret that the deed was done, and the manner of its doing. The deed was to enact a sort of shameless mediaeval betrayal, whipped up by the media. The manner of its doing was through the electoral device that we have for the leadership. Do we really want to have such a crude device for ever in our party? It is like saying that we will grant the Leader of the Opposition the right to call a general election any time that he feels that the Government might be weak. It is a crazy part of my party's constitution that we lay ourselves open to such a self-inflicted wound.

Those who use this device will not be at peace within their souls over the years to come. Were any of those who have used this device to inherit the crown, uneasy would lie his head. The consequences are yet to come. The backlash is starting in the constituencies. The Conservative party association offices have had their switchboards jammed with protest calls. Jacques Delors is laughing all the way to the Eurofed.

I am reminded of the ballad of the battle of Chevy Chace, where it is written:

"The child may rue that is unborne,
The hunting of that day".

I fear that that is the case. Nevertheless, we mu
past. We must bind up our wounds and bury o
must look to the future. We must reunite an
let us behave over the next few days with dign
be a fitting tribute to my right hon. Frien
Minister for us to behave with the same dignit
she has behaved today.

6.22 pm

Mr. Terry Rooney (Bradford, North): I und
it is rare for a maiden speech to be made in a
as this, but I feel that it is not inappropriate t
now in that the Bradford, North by-election
precipitated the crisis of confidence of many
the Government and thus the resignation o
Minister. I also understand that, while my sha
was 52 per cent., under current electoral law
no second or third ballot.

I must at this stage pay tribute to my pred
Wall. All those who came to know Pat found
man of the highest integrity, a thoroughly
with a wry sense of humour and deeply h
convictions. In his all-too-short period of offi
the respect of friend and foe alike for his dilige
and compassion, and, despite his birt
unwavering commitment to his constituency.

The people of my constituency have very
for the Government's record. For over a deca
has been a test bed for an alphabet soup of
with a TEC, a CAT, a UDG, a TVEI, a CP
and, most recently and disgracefully, a
Conservative party's commitment to edu
exposed under the Pickles regime, which cut
from school budgets in 18 months, increased
prices by 78 per cent. and diverted scarce ca
into prestige city centre projects, despite Bra
acknowledged as the crumbling schools capit

The final insult to over 15,000 school
Bradford, North is the recently opened city
college, blessed with a capital investmen
taxpayer of £7,033 per pupil, while for loc
authority schools the figure is a paltry £127

On the housing front, we have seen h
double, the council waiting list increase by
and a 75 per cent. reduction in moneys for i
grants. The 1980 housing capital allocati
million. By 1990, this had reduced to £9 milli
real terms of £47 million. This would finance
of an additional 1,200 houses, or 11,000 i
grants to maintain and retain the older hous
Bradford. The prospect of slum clearance
looms on the horizon because of lack of inves
Government commitment. The ultimate i
Government's latest foray into housing financ
Bradford's housing revenue account robbed
of subsidy, in one fell swoop slashing repair
for public sector housing and losing some 12
local construction industry.

The record is no better in employment g
1980s have seen the loss of 32,000 manufactu
Bradford because of Government policies. Ou
textile industry has seen 12,000 jobs disap
highlights the Government's disgraceful prev
the future of the multi-fibre arrangement.

Unemployment in Bradford, North is now 17 per cent. and rising, with over 2,000 people having suffered unemployment for more than 12 months.

The health service in Bradford will shed no tears at the departure from office of the right hon. and learned Member for Rushcliffe (Mr. Clarke). It remains to be seen whether his successor, the right hon. Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave), has any greater commitment to patients and staff. He should be aware of the opt-out proposals for four hospitals in Bradford—the Royal Infirmary, Bierley Hall, Woodlands and St. Luke's. I ask him to take note of the various ballots on this issue, which show that, of the nursing staff, 93 per cent. are against, of consultants 86 per cent. are against, of general practitioners 88 per cent. are against and of the general public 97 per cent. are against.

The proposed general manager of the hospital trust has described these ballots as unrepresentative, which equates with Joe Stalin being the father of democracy. I sincerely hope that the new Secretary of State will take account of the strong feelings in Bradford against this experimentation and instead offer the prospect of early treatment to the 9,000-plus on the waiting lists, 20 per cent. of whom have been waiting over a year.

Poll tax is the albatross of this Government, to which none of the contenders in next week's ballot have offered the only solution—its repeal and replacement with a modern property tax based on fairness and ability to pay. Some 93 per cent. of my constituents in Bradford, North are losers under the poll tax. This figure will rise to 98 per cent. when safety nets and transitional relief disappear. It is no good Conservative Members complaining about the impact of the implementation of the poll tax. Every one of them trooped through the Government Lobby to support the legislation that has produced it, and every one of them stands equally condemned and carries equal guilt. To cry foul now is the equivalent of Christie asking for a retrial on the ground that he was not aware that arsenic was poisonous.

Despite my love for and devotion to my constituency, I seek no special favours for its population. On 8 November, my constituents were given the opportunity to pass judgment on the Government. Being magnanimous in victory, I think that it is only right and proper that the rest of the country be offered the same opportunity as the people of Bradford, North—in a general election, and the sooner the better. I am certain that the majority of those in this place share the same sentiment.

6.30 pm

Sir Bernard Braine (Castle Point): One of the nicer features of our practice in this place is for the Member who is called immediately after someone has made his maiden speech to congratulate that Member on what for most of us—I imagine this goes for the hon. Member for Bradford, North (Mr. Rooney)—is the overcoming of somewhat of an ordeal. I preface my remarks by congratulating the hon. Gentleman on his speech. He spoke quietly and with confidence. He is young and I have no doubt that if he looks after his constituency—that is the first requirement—he will be with us for many years. We look forward to hearing his future contributions.

This has been one of the most remarkable debates to which I have ever listened. I have no doubt that it was designed to pillory my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, but it has turned out quite differently. I do think that I have ever heard my right hon. Friend s more brilliantly from the Government Front Bench. not think that I have ever heard her speak with gr confidence either in the Chamber or anywhere else. It the Opposition who were lambasted. I say that sadness because at the end of the day this is not a plac hurling brickbats at one another. This House is the g council of the nation. Thousands of our fighting me in the Gulf and the assumption that we are all maki that there will be no fighting; this then is a momen choosing words carefully.

Mr. Giles Radice (Durham, North): So what has Conservative party been doing over the past week?

Sir Bernard Braine: If the hon. Gentleman wishe make a remark, let him stand up.

Mr. Radice: It is true that we need to choose our w carefully, but what has the Conservative party been d over the past week?

Sir Bernard Braine: I am speaking as the Father o House. I am speaking for myself and I shall express own views. I am not here to engage in attacks upon Opposition or on one part of the House or the other. I merely to draw the attention of some hon. Members to gravity of what has been said and what may lie ahead our people. That is my purpose and I shall not take long in carrying it out.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasg The right hon. Gentleman has referred to our soldiers other service men who are stationed in the middle e Given the growing threat of war in that troubled par the world, does he agree that the House should debate Gulf crisis in the very near future?

Sir Bernard Braine: We have already debated it, a hope that we shall debate it again. I agree entirely with hon. Gentleman about that.

I have been in Parliament for a long time. I have sa this place under Mr. Speaker and five of his predeces and also nine Prime Ministers. They were all good m who did their duty in their own way and left their mark our national life. Some were struck down by illness bef the time came to leave. Some lost an election and did return. The truth is that ours is a hazardous calli Looking back over the whole of my 40 years as a Mem this has to be—I speak solely for myself—the saddest that I can recall. I did not think that what has happe over the past few days was inevitable. It has happen however, and listening to my right hon. Friend the Pri Minister earlier, it is my judgment that it should not h happened.

Given my great love for this place and its central rol our national life, in my experience my right hon. Frie by any standard that one cares to apply, has been greatest Prime Minister in peacetime this century. Neit David Lloyd George nor Winston Churchill, w provided such superb leadership after the beginning of t devastating world wars, would ever have been elected their high office in peacetime. The historians among know why and it is no part of my purpose to go into details.

In the past decade my right hon. Friend the Pri Minister has steered the United Kingdom from a state

[Sir Bernard Braine]

relative decline—there is no argument about that—at the bottom of the European league to where we are today near the top. It is—*[Interruption.]* There is no need to jeer. We know the facts. There is always imperfection in our society and in what we do. There are some occasions when we do not succeed, but if we compare the situation in which we found ourselves when my right hon. Friend became Prime Minister and that in which the vast majority of our people live today, there is no doubt that a transformation has taken place and that we owe a great deal to her achievements.

I think that the House knows that I have tended to be a specialist in foreign affairs. I have been to eastern Europe on many occasions. I have been also to the United States, Africa and Asia. In my travels I have become aware of the countless occasions on which my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has earned respect for herself and enhanced the reputation of our country to a greater extent than I have known anyone else to do during all the years that I have sat in this place. Never let that be forgotten.

These are not my views alone. One would not have succeeded in remaining in the House after 12 general elections, in most of which my majority has increased and in some of which there was a swing to my party locally when the country elected a Labour Government, without knowing, or trying to know, what ordinary people think. One would not have otherwise been allowed the honour of representing the constituency without doing so. I have made myself aware of the thinking of ordinary people because in what we do here, and in the leaders that we choose, we have a distinct responsibility to those whom we represent.

I shall not speak for too long because I am aware that only a few of us will be able to speak our minds in this debate. All of us, however, have our private thoughts. I should like to say publicly, here in this Chamber, that despite what has happened in the Conservative party in recent weeks most of us are grateful to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister for her achievements at home and abroad, and for her untiring energy in the service of the nation. We are also grateful for her candour—an unexpected quality in politics—and her courage. In that context, let us remember what the young Winston Churchill said when he was asked, "What, Winston, is the greatest of the Christian virtues?". He replied, "Courage." When asked, "Why do you say that?", he answered, "Because it is the only one that guarantees the rest."

The verdict rests not with us but with history. My right hon. Friend need not fear what history will say about her.

6.40 pm

Mr. Denis Healey (Leeds, East): It is always a pleasure to follow the right hon. Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine). I fear that he and I are much of an age, and we have both been in the House for a fair time. I follow him in at least one of his comments. I have been privileged to be drawn in debate against the Prime Minister for some 16 years now, since she was a junior Treasury spokesman—and, if I may say so, a very able one. For anyone who has watched her for so long, it is a moving experience to see her leaving her position in such circumstances. I must confess that, during Prime Minister's Question Time and much of her speech in this debate, I thought that she showed her finest qualities, and I listened to her with sympathy and admiration. She has guts, and she has a degree of determination to which I fear that none of those who are now challenging her can lay claim. I agree very much with the right hon. Member for Castle Point on that point: she is a leader.

It is a little sad to find the Prime Minister compelled to leave office against her will, not because the country has been given a chance to express its views about her—as I believe that it should—but by colleagues—some sycophants, some hypocrites—who up to 24 hours ago were publicly professing their undying loyalty to her. I think that the right hon. Member for Castle Point will agree that is somewhat distasteful to witness. They have decided to throw her out because at the moment she is the best and most convenient scapegoat for the failure of the Government's collective policies. I shall miss her, as I think we all will, whether she goes to Brussels as the first chairman of the European central bank—which seems to be her preference—or, as suggested by one of her hon. Friends, to Pasadena as the governor of California.

However, I am bound to say that the Prime Minister leaves behind her a very sad legacy. I must comment a little on some of the claims that she made in her speech about that legacy. The fact is that even the Chancellor has admitted that our economy is now in deep recession. Unemployment has been rising for the past six months, and we are told by the Chancellor that it will rise faster for at least another 12. Inflation has been rising for more than 12 months, and—according to the Government's preferred measure—is now running at twice the level achieved by our partners in the exchange rate mechanism which we have just joined.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that he is entirely mistaken in saying that the Chancellor said that we were in deep recession? He said no such thing; he said that, if there was a recession, it would be shallow, not deep.

Mr. Healey: "Shallow" is a word that I am quite prepared to use about the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Perhaps it would have been fairer to say that the phrase "deep recession" was used a fortnight ago by the Association of British Chambers of Commerce, which works at the coalface and, I suspect, knows a little bit more about what is happening than some of the Chancellor's advisers in the Treasury.

Bankruptcies are now at a 10-year high, and only this week the Government published figures showing that the decline in output in the last quarter had been the steepest for the past 10 years. Meanwhile, our social and economic infrastructure is collapsing. Anyone who meets teachers, nurses, consultants or university lecturers knows that demoralisation in the professions connected with education and health has never been so serious, and it will take many years to repair.

The CBI has pointed out that we have the worst transport system in Europe, and anyone who—unlike Conservative Members—travels on London tube trains or buses will know how true that is. I never thought that I would live to see the day when Britain would be performing worse than Italy on output, inflation and balance of payments, and when London—to the disgrace of this Government—would be a dirtier city than Milan.

Moreover, all that has happened in a decade when Britain has had the once-in-a-lifetime—in fact, once-in-history—advantages of North sea oil, which gave the Government an extra £70,000 million in revenue in their first 10 years and £100,000 million in assistance to the balance of payments. In spite of that, we now have the biggest balance of payments deficit among the larger countries in the developed world.

Mr. Sayeed: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Healey: I shall give way in a moment. I always enjoy giving way to the hon. Gentleman because he is so helpful.

The Government have also enjoyed £27 billion in extra revenue as a result of cuts in public benefits. Now I give way, with pleasure, to the hon. Member for Bristol, East (Mr. Sayeed).

Mr. Sayeed: When the right hon. Gentleman gave way last, he admitted that he had made a mistake. *[Laughter.]* Perhaps I should rephrase that.

Does the right hon. Gentleman feel, even now, a sense of shame about the time when, as Chancellor, he had to go cap in hand to the International Monetary Fund?

Mr. Healey: To be quite honest, I do not. I am often criticised for having gone to the IMF, but let me give the hon. Gentleman the facts. In 1976, I borrowed £2·5 billion from the IMF at an interest rate of between 4 and 5 per cent.; I paid it all back by 1979. Last year alone, this Government borrowed £19 billion from the financial markets at interest rates four or five times as high. According to the Chancellor, this year they will be borrowing £15 billion from the financial markets at interest rates 3·5 times higher than the rates that I incurred. I thank the hon. Gentleman for giving me an opportunity to say that. However, I confess that I did slip the hon. Gentleman a pony, and he has performed the necessary service with exquisite aplomb.

The Prime Minister came to office with one slogan on her flag—we must not live on tick. Conservative Members are looking at me with bemused fascination, and I do not blame them. The increase in living standards enjoyed by some people, especially during 1988 and last year, was entirely financed by borrowing. Personal borrowing has been higher than at any time in our history, and as a result of the Chancellor's necessary measures, a number of families now face the possibility of dispossession because they can no longer pay their mortgages on the houses which, thanks to the Government, they have bought.

Company borrowing has never been so high. It has doubled during the past year, as the Leader of the House, who was a distinguished—or at any rate a junior—Treasury Minister must recall. Even the public sector borrowing requirement is mounting month by month, despite the fact that the Government's revenues have enjoyed colossal and unprecedented assistance from North sea oil.

One consequence of that excessive borrowing is not only that we must finance our deficit from the financial markets at mediaeval interest rates, but—according to *The Economist*—40 per cent. of British industry will be owned by foreigners by 1995 if we continue in that way. That is only another five years. I do not believe that the record that I have described is one of which any Conservative Member could be proud.

I have concentrated on issues on which the whole of the Conservative party has been united since it took office. I have not mentioned the poll tax—although I could have had a great deal of fun with that—and I have not mentioned its divisions on Europe. The economic and social policies that have resulted in the disaster that I have described were supported by every challenger to the Prime Minister, including the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine)——

Mr. Skinner: Gary Glitter.

Mr. Healey: With great respect to my hon. Friend, whom I dearly love, he is not right—the right hon. Gentleman is Flash Gordon.

Many of us remember with affection the late Lord Kilmuir—previously Sir David Maxwell Fyfe—of whom it was once said, "There is nothing more like death in life than Sir David Maxwell Fyfe." When he went to the Lords, he told a wondering world that loyalty was the Conservative party's secret weapon. The trouble is that, as has been shown during recent weeks, the loyalty of the Tory party is similar to that of Colonel Nasser's generals, of whom it was said that they would be 1,000 per cent. loyal until the day for treachery arrived. Now, it could more fairly be said that disloyalty is the Conservative party's public weapon. It has been a distasteful fight during the past few days.

I must tell Conservative Members that gutless opportunists have every right to choose an appropriate representative, and they may well exercise that right next Tuesday. However, they have no right to foist their choice on the people of this country as Prime Minister. Our people must be given their right to choose their Prime Minister, and the sooner the better.

6.56 pm

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Today, we have heard one of the most magnificent speeches from a Prime Minister that has been heard in decades. At the end of my right hon. Friend's speech, I was tempted to remind the House of the events of 1938-39, and to say to my right hon. Friend, "In the name of God, stay." Unfortunately, that is not to be. Nevertheless, it is within our grasp and our ability to pay tribute to her work during the past 11 years, and before that as Leader of the Opposition. She outlined in her speech her many achievements, which I do not need to repeat because the points have been well made and they are true. It is also true that, as Disraeli said:

"The Tory party, unless it is a national party, is nothing."

On the question of Europe, for which my right hon. Friend suffered so much, there is no doubt that she has been proved right and that she will be proved right again. She has done the right thing for the right reasons.

For 20 years, first by stealth and then by sleight of hand, a web has been woven over the subject of Europe. It was a web of deceit to cover what was actually being done. I make no bones about the fact that I want the European Community to work. I voted for the Single European Act and I want the House to preserve the maximum influence possible over the conduct of our affairs in the European Community. That is precisely what my right hon. Friend sought. That is the true position. She wanted to ensure that we played an active part in the Community, but that we did not lose the essential sovereignty of the House in the bargain.

[Mr. William Cash]

The reason is simple. Underneath all the paraphernalia about the central bank, the technicalities of which we need not go into, the fact is that such a bank would prevent hon. Members and those whom they represent from forming a proper judgment about the economic and social priorities that they wish for themselves and their children.

My right hon. Friend was right in the view that she took because at the intergovernmental conference that is about to take place the amendments, which would have effect in 1994 or 2000—the date is less important than the content—are what matter. I challenge any contender to say before the House that he would have agreed to a date without the policy or programme attached to it. To pre-empt the intergovernmental conference at the Rome summit was unthinkable.

Furthermore, if the alleged goals were accepted by Parliament—a sort of automatic progression or historical inevitability—why are we to be presented with treaty amendments? The fact is that those matters have not been settled and that is what the future debate is all about.

My right hon. Friend, with her integrity, set out that case and she has paid a heavy price for doing so. She told people the truth and, as Churchill said, when the British people are told the truth they will respond. My right hon. Friend has paid the penalty for telling the truth which in this context was regarded as unforgiveable.

The Conservative party must find the centre of gravity on the European question. There is a centre of gravity and we will find it. We will have our debates and we will make our decisions about the next leader. Of one thing I am sure, and that is that we will reunite, put all these tragedies behind us and discover a policy on Europe which the Conservative party will be able to endorse.

7.2 pm

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): I speak on behalf not only of my colleagues in the Scottish National party but of my hon. Friends in Plaid Cymru. We shall all be in the Lobby tonight supporting the motion of no confidence. That will come as no surprise to hon. Members as our parties have a clear ideological dispute with the Conservative party and its Government, not the least aspect of which has been the Government's resolute determination to turn their face against the possibility of a constitutional change which recognises the rights and sovereignty of the people of Scotland and Wales. Scotland is perhaps unique in Europe in that it has two Parliament buildings but no Government of its own.

During the "Thatcher years", as they will be described, we have seen the results of the Tory party's policies in Scotland—policies which are alien to our tradition of social justice and caring. We see the national health service in crisis, with disillusioned doctors and disappointed nurses wondering whether they will have job opportunities in the careers that they have chosen.

We see our proud universities, with their ancient traditions, facing a real cash crisis, wondering whether they will be able to continue to offer the courses that they wish to our young people and to those who wish to return to education later in life.

We see our steel industry, its workers and its dependent communities, being sold down the river on the altar of privatisation so dearly loved by the Prime Minister.

Scotland has been earmarked as a possible site for a nuclear dump. Yet in the area chosen in the highlands and islands of Scotland, the democratically elected Members of Parliament have made it clear at all levels of government—in the district and regions, and in this Parliament and the European Parliament—that we are clearly opposed to such a project going ahead because it would result in the destruction of the area's basic industries, which depend on the perception of a clean environment—fishing, agriculture, tourism and the whisky industry. The people of that area clearly do not want a nuclear dump at Dounreay, yet the Government are wishing it upon us.

We also continue to see the loss of Scotland's life blood as our youngest, brightest and best leave Scotland to seek opportunities elsewhere. No nation can face the prospect of losing its life blood, which has continued under the Thatcher Administration.

I could spend the rest of the evening embroidering a tapestry of the devastation, despair, despondency and disillusionment wrought in the past 11 years in my nation of Scotland, but my colleagues and I wish to concentrate on one particular issue.

Our amendment, which has not been selected, draws attention to the poll tax, which is surely germane to the situation in which we find ourselves. It has always been seen as one of the most socially unjust taxes, and it is one which I would describe as immoral. The Prime Minister must recognise that her stubborn insistence on implementation of the poll tax has become her domestic Belgrano. Only now are people beginning to address the key issue of the poll tax. We in Scotland have been warning for several years of the implications of that tax and how it would affect us.

One of the great sadnesses must be that not only the Prime Minister but the Leader of the Opposition have judged the poll tax only on how it will affect their personal and political futures. The Prime Minister has realised that her adherence to the policy has cost not only 11 seats in Scotland at the last general election and more at the next general election, but the support of those English Members of Parliament who so happily voted for the poll tax in Scotland but are now realising its implications for their own constituencies. It has taken a long time for democratic reality to dawn on those people.

Meanwhile, the Leader of the Opposition and his colleagues have not fought against the poll tax with the adherence that they should have. They clearly saw it as the key to No. 10. The "stop it" campaign, so gladly launched by the Labour party in Scotland and endorsed by the Leader of the Opposition, soon became the "stump up" campaign.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): Does the hon. Lady recall the Second Reading of the poll tax Bill for Scotland, against which both she and I voted? Will she explain why she was not present?

Mrs. Ewing: I do not want to launch into a history lesson, but I was not present. Throughout the year, my colleagues had clearly stated our opposition to the poll tax. I am glad that the hon. Gentleman has attended this debate——

Mr. Foulkes *rose*——

Mrs. Ewing: With my natural courtesy, I give way to him again.

Mr. Foulkes: The hon. Lady, who is indeed naturally courteous, will recall that the person who is now her hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas) was supposed to be here on Second Reading, but for all his ranting and raving about the poll tax subsequently was not present to vote against the Second Reading of the poll tax Bill for Scotland. Does that not show him for the hypocrite that he is?

Mr. Speaker: Order. Policies can be hypocritical, but not individual Members.

Mr. Foulkes: In that case, does it not expose him?

Mr. Speaker: No—the hon. Gentleman must withdraw the word "hypocrite".

Mr. Foulkes: Absolutely.

Mr. Douglas: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I was absent because I was a member of the Select Committee on Defence and was paired.

Mr. Speaker: Order. No point of order arises.

Mrs. Ewing: The record of my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas) in opposing the poll tax is beyond dispute. I am surprised that the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) is taking that stance.

The reality is that Labour Members have guilty consciences. Only those of us who have taken a strong, principled stance—in Scotland for an extra year—have sought to protect the poor and to offer a shield for the most vulnerable in our society. Our actions struck the hole in the bows of the flagship of the Prime Minister's third term and began the inevitable sinking of it, taking her with it.

Mrs. Maria Fyfe (Glasgow, Maryhill) *rose*——

Mrs. Ewing: I will give way when I have finished this point. Whatever the candidates for the leadership of the Conservative party—none of whom is present tonight—may say, we have made it clear that we do not want any amendment of the poll tax; we want it abandoned, and replaced by a local income tax, to which my party has adhered for more than 20 years.

Mrs. Fyfe: Given the hon. Lady's entirely justified criticisms of the Tory Government and her reference to the launching of the poll tax flagship, do she and her colleagues not regret voting the Tory Government in 11 years ago?

Mrs. Ewing: The hon. Lady, who was not a Member in 1979, may not be aware that the then Labour Administration—this can be confirmed by senior Labour Members who have written about it in their memoirs—were not prepared to make constitutional change for Scotland a matter of confidence. They would not exercise a three-line Whip and broke their election manifesto. I have no regret about bringing down a Government who did not fulfil their manifesto commitments. Perhaps the hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mrs. Fyfe) has more regrets about the failure of the committee of 100, of which she was a member, to stand up for the poor people of Scotland. I salute the people of Scotland for their dignity, their pride and their determination. By their principled stance, they have brought about the Tory leadership crisis and exposed Labour's weakness.

By resigning now, the Prime Minister may have salvaged some of her reputation, but nothing can hide the abysmal judgment and disgraceful role of the Leader of the Opposition and the Labour party in trying to throw her the lifebelt of their motion, which was tabled before voting had finished on Tuesday when it was evident even to the most junior Member that the Prime Minister was finished. It is a sign of the Labour party's desperation that it tried to keep her in office and provided the Conservative party with an opportunity not to show unity but at least to show some solidarity.

I will highlight the Labour party's desperation by quoting comments given by three Labour Members in the past few weeks. In the *West Highland Free Press* on 9 November, the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) said:

> "It is more certain than ever that it is in the Labour Party's interests that the lady should stay exactly where she is—for a few months!"

Appearing on "Behind the Lines" on 19 November, the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) said:

> "It is in the Labour party's interests for Thatcher to stay. I am praying for Thatcher to win."

The hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) said at Prime Minister's Question Time:

> "May I wish the Prime Minister well in her current difficulty? Although I cannot speak for Conservative Members, many Opposition Members are rooting for her." [*Official Report*, 14 November 1990; Vol. 180, c. 447.]

In the light of that, one must query whether the Leader of the Opposition is serious. Today, he rightly called for a general election—a view which I endorse. The general technique of the Labour party, particularly during by-elections and because of the abysmal standards of its candidates, is to have media hype and to hide its candidate. After today's pathetic performance, the right hon. Gentleman should be taken away and hidden from the electorate. He should be hiding, because if he cannot do better than that he will be in for a hiding.

7.16 pm

Sir Patrick McNair-Wilson (New Forest): The resigniation of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is a sad occasion for many Conservative Members. Perhaps more than any other Conservative Prime Minister since the war, she has achieved fundamental and radical changes and did more to dismantle the socialist edifice.

Between 1945 and 1979, Britain was governed for 17 years by socialists and for 17 years by Conservatives. During those 17 socialist years—I became an hon. Member in 1964—we had the capture of the commanding heights and the establishment of a socialist state. Sadly, during the 17 years of Conservative rule, we tried to manage a socialist economy.

When my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister came on the scene in 1979, many of us who had longed to see it before began to see the dismantlement of that edifice and the rolling back of the socialist frontier. She may be remembered by my party for all the things that she did, but she will be remembered by the Labour party because as a result of her changes it has decided to run away from socialism. It knows that it is unelectable on the policies that it used to regard as sacrosanct. If it is any consolation to my right hon. Friend, she has been fatally wounded by a flash in the pan. Conservative Members and the country will miss her because we shall not see her like again in the foreseeable future.

[Sir Patrck McNair-Wilson]

Two great issues are facing Britain. The first is the economy, which is coming right. There is no doubt that had the Opposition had to face the 1987 crash, they would have poured money into the economy, too.

I was born in 1929, when the American banking system immediately responded to the great crash by reducing available liquidity by one quarter. Everyone in the House at the time of the 1987 crash declared—as did all the opinion-formers outside—that we should fill the hole in the world economy with credit. It is perfectly true that the British economy was stronger than many might have imagined, and that by filling the hole with credit we overheated the system. However, fine-tuning an economy —as the Opposition know better than anyone else—is extremely difficult. The economy had to be controlled and cooled down. During the next 12 months we shall see the fruits of those policies. My sadness is that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister will not be leading the party to benefit from those successful policies.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right. The Prime Minister will be remembered for many things, but, above all, she will be remembered for the ignominious defeat that she has suffered in the past two days.

Sir Patrick McNair-Wilson: I would not quarrel with that description of what has happened to my right hon. Friend. I am deeply saddened that something has been manufactured to take her away from the world stage and the stage here.

The second issue is our relationship with Europe. I regard it as more important than management of the domestic economy, as mistakes in the domestic economy can be corrected, but the mistakes that we could make in our relationship with Europe could be irreparable.

When I came into the House in 1964, the Opposition were lamenting the existence of what they laughingly called the gnomes of Zurich, who were destroying their ability to manage their affairs. I remember Lord Wilson standing at the Dispatch Box explaining to the House that, although Britain's economy had underlying strength, a crisis of confidence was affecting our currency. That terrible crisis dogged the Labour Government until they were eventually put out of office in 1970. One of the problems which made that crisis so difficult to solve was the effect of a tightly fixed exchange rate, under the Bretton Woods system, and our subsequent problems with expanding the economy. I remember many occasions on which the Labour Government had to cut hospital and other welfare programmes because of those financial constraints.

If we are not careful we shall be on the threshold of a situation where the gnomes of Zurich will look like pixies —we shall be run by a central bank which is effectively beyond our control, and we shall have surrendered our money supply. My right hon. Friend has fought passionately, throughout her period in office, to get a relationship with Europe which gives us, and the other nations, the freedom to manage our affairs without such constraints.

We are now members of the European exchange rate mechanism. Thank goodness sterling can operate within a 12 per cent. band. If anyone believes that we can solve our problems by bringing the band down to 4·5 per cent., I can assure them that they are 100 per cent. wrong.

Next month, after the German elections, hon. Members will witness one of the most significant economic events —the German economy bearing the full brunt of the cost of repairing the east. German interest rates will begin to move up, and we shall witness their effect upon the entire Community economy. My prediction is that the standard of living in the Community will start to fall during the next five years.

If, as a nation, we are not free to manage our domestic economy, we will fall along with other European nations. I am convinced that my right hon. Friend was correct to be prudent and careful. In the future there will be two super states—the United States and Germany. Many of the other European countries are scrambling about, trying to lock Germany into institutions in the belief that that will control her ambitions and power. I very much doubt it.

My family have had a home in continental Europe for many years. Anyone who believes that Europe is some glorious, united Utopia knows nothing about it. Going to Europe and living the gilded life in huge hotels, attending conferences, is not the same as talking to ordinary people.

I am convinced that my right hon. Friend's greatest contribution to the nation—quite apart from what she may have done for the domestic economy—was putting the brake on any rash moves across Europe and European monetary union. To some extent, we lose in the translation. The French call the single currency "monnaie unique"—something completely unique. They do not want it and will probably fight against it. The only difference between the French and ourselves is that they have the happy habit of joining things, and, if they do not like them, starting to sabotage them. Sadly, we play by different rules.

Mr. Thomas Graham (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde) *rose*——

Sir Patrick McNair-Wilson: I am coming to the end of my remarks.

My right hon. Friend has played a significant role in maintaining our ability to manage our economy, and therefore our national state. To lose that now—to give it away—would be a tragedy after such a brilliant career.

7.26 pm

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): I have always wanted to write a novel.

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): Why not?

Mr. Rees: My hon. Friend is right. I have been sitting here since the beginning of the debate. Successive Conservative Members have said that the Prime Minister is brilliant and that today is the saddest day of their lives. I understand that, but what they all forget is that more than 40 per cent. of them voted in the first ballot to ensure that the Prime Minister could not last. If that is true, I think that I have a title for my novel—"The Strange Death of the Thatcher Government." The realities have not been accepted by the bit players in the event.

Mr. Robert Litherland (Manchester, Central): Is it whodunnit?

Mr. Rees: I will tell hon. Members "whodunnit". It happened yesterday afternoon, when it was made clear to the Prime Minister that she would not win the next ballot. If Opposition Members and Scottish nationalists have been saying that we wanted the Prime Minister to stay, it was not because we loved her policies but because, in the past year, from by-elections, local elections and Euro-elections, we realised that the electorate did not think her policies brilliant. The electorate, not hon. Members, decide who forms the Government. That is what the system is all about. That is why I have to tell the Scottish nationalists what I said on local radio this morning—that I do not know what will happen, but that I shall be sorry that the Prime Minister will not lead the Conservative party at the next general election, because that would be good for us, at least in Yorkshire.

I want to speak of some of the myths which arise in "The Strange Death of the Thatcher Government"—the socialist economy and the welfare state. Decaying industry was taken over in 1945. The coal industry was out of date and non-technological, and had been in private hands. Nearly every hon. Member agreed that that was the reality. The Churchill and Macmillan Governments made no attempt to alter the situation. Indeed, Macmillan had advocated that arrangement in the 1930s. To equate the 1987 crash with the 1929 crash is really stretching the truth.

I remind the hon. Member for New Forest (Sir P. McNair-Wilson) that in 1973 the Conservative Government were defeated because of the oil crisis. There was another oil crisis in 1979. If events in the Gulf develop as many people suggest, there will be another oil crisis soon. That cannot be ignored. The Government would have to take steps to deal with it.

I am glad that we have had this debate today. I would have been more glad if I could see more Government supporters in the House. I would much prefer to have a debate in the House than on television on programmes such as "Newsnight", in the press and in editorials. The House is the place which decides what happens and it is where the debate should take place. I am glad that the Prime Minister spoke, although on several occasions this morning I thought that she would not. It was in this House, if not in the Chamber, that the coup de grace took place. I am sorry that there are not many Conservative Members present.

Hon. Members: Where are they?

Mr. Rees: Perhaps they will pass through during the evening.

During my almost 30 years in the House, many changes have taken place in the Labour party. I heard a story that we in the Labour party were the creatures of our constituency parties, and that our constituencies told us what to do. I tell the few Conservative Members here why the Thatcher Government fell. It was because 70, 80 or 90 youngsters in the House knew that they would lose their seats at the next election. At the same time, one reads that two Conservative Members will be carpeted, or perhaps worse, by their local constituency associations.

Is that democracy? It is exactly the point that they put to us. It is absolutely right to take the views of our constituency parties. I have been in the Labour party for over 50 years but, at the end of the day, a Member of Parliament must do what he wants and face the consequences later. If not, this place will not work. Deselection is a problem.

It is a pity that the case of the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) was not put in the House. I have watched him on so many television shows. I have read about him in newspapers, but I have not heard it on the floor of the House. I wish that he had been here to hear the arguments and the venom of the right hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Ridley). We have heard the views of the right hon. and learned Member for Surrey, East (Sir G. Howe). He put forward a vicious argument. He should have been in the Chamber today.

Mr. Dalyell: He was here.

Mr. Rees: I did not see him. Perhaps he was standing at the gate of paradise.

I should like to see one thing changed. My right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) referred to it. A sordid matter has been much talked about in the past three or four years. It is the way in which civil servant press officers and others at No. 10 have not only briefed the press, quite properly, about Government policy, but have issued briefings against Cabinet Ministers. There was a straight briefing by civil servants that the then Leader of the House was whatever he was said to be.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): Semi-detached. And he was knifed.

Mr. Rees: Indeed, he was said to be semi-detached and he was knifed. There were other such cases. I hope that, when the Labour party comes to power, the press department at No. 10 will be divided into the straight civil service side and the political side. The political side should not be inside No. 10. There is plenty of room just across the road, in what was the Home Office. There must be a distinction between the two. Rumours are running around that two members of the kitchen Cabinet have been given peerages. Someone whispered to me that that is the only way in which the story of Westland will be kept quiet.

The major reason why the Government are electorally unpopular in my constituency is not Europe. That is not at the forefront of people's minds. For many of them, it is the bank rate and its effect on purchasing houses. But the poll tax is the reason why the Government are in disarray. It is not simply the tax in itself. It is a bad tax—even Adam Smith could see that. There is no relationship with the ability to pay. It is bureaucratic and expensive. But in my novel, "The Strange Death of the Thatcher Government", it will be shown that the way in which it was conceived was its problem. There was no consultation with local treasurers or local authorities.

Sir Eldon Griffiths *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Rees: Well, I have made my inquiries for my novel. It will be based not on fiction but on reality. It will be a new sort of novel. I know others have written such novels.

Mr. Graham: I am sure that my right hon. Friend's novel will place on record the fact that schools in Scotland can no longer give the school kids eye tests. The kids have to go elsewhere. Is that not an appalling indictment of any Government?

Mr. Rees: That is one of the effects of the poll tax. Certainly, local authority finance will have to be carefully

[Mr. Rees]

examined in the wide sense. However, the poll tax must be scrapped. There can be no pussyfooting with the poll tax. It is a bad tax, and the Government have learnt the effect of it. A new Government would have to end it.

I could raise many other points, but many were raised earlier and I wish to be as brief as I promised. However, I feel that I must mention the crime rate. I am interested in the crime rate because, in 1979, the Conservative party issued many familiar pamphlets saying that the Conservative party was the party of law and order. They said that it would solve the problem of law and order.

The latest statistics of recorded crime published in July this year show that the rise of 15 per cent. in the first quarter of 1990 was the largest increase since 1857. The crime rate in Britain has gone up and up. There are two points to be made about that. It is said that the statistics on recorded crime do not tell the full story, but they did not tell the full story in 1979 either. If there are more policemen, there will be more recorded crime. One must also take into account the changed nature of society. For my money, I should like to see the causes of crime investigated and analysed more objectively than they are at the time of a general election.

Whatever else this brilliant Government did, they failed miserably on the crime rate. By surprise, they have fallen even though no Conservative Member who has spoken today seemed to believe that they did anything wrong. That is another story which people in our constituencies know.

Another intriguing matter will come into my novel. In the 1970s, documents were drawn up, copies of which have now been passed to me. Certain people said that the country was ungovernable. It is alleged that there were plots to deal with that position. The crime rate was said to be so high that something had to be done. My hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) also knows about the matter. People with no political nous believed that all the problems were due to the wicked Labour Government. It was not so. The crime rate is worse now than it was then.

I hope that in the present—to use the phrase used then—ungovernable state of the country the same dirty tricks will not be used against this Government. Dirty tricks may have been the reason for the strange death of the Thatcher Government, but they did not come from the lower end of the security services or from dissident politicians. The reason why the Government have fallen is the Conservative party itself and the behaviour in the past week of many people in the Government.

Many Conservative Members and members of the Government know what the last chapter of my book on why the Government fell will contain. The Prime Minister was stabbed in her political back by her own party, by members of her own Government. That should not be allowed to happen with a new leader. We must have a general election. I believe that we will have an election sooner rather than later as a result of what has happened. For my money, the sooner the better.

7.39 pm

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): Of all the speeches that I have heard in this House, only one stands out in my memory. It was made by the then right hon. Member for Ebbw Vale—now the right hon. Member for B Gwent (Mr. Foot)—on the night the Labour Gover fell, and it was one of the usual brilliant performa that great orator. I remember particularly his rema Lady Margaret was going out to battle with the armour bearer going before and her hand was in th of the boy David. I have found out that the g speeches in this House are usually made by the lose on that night the Labour Government fell.

Today, we heard a brilliant speech. No matte anyone thinks of the Prime Minister, she was at h today. She spoke with passion and with power. T and thrust was excellent. She replied to her critics. undoubtedly a difficult time for her, but she got full for her performance. I have many differences wi Prime Minister, but I pay tribute to her brilliance When history is written and all is revealed, as eventually be, her name will undoubtedly be embed it because she has been, in her own way, an outst Prime Minister. She has won three general electio made a great change in this United Kingdom. Th never be forgotten.

Alas, Northern Ireland has had a sad history w Prime Minister. We expected her to be a staunch Unionist who would never do what she did Anglo-Irish Agreement. It was unthinkable, especi when the Irish Forum produced its report the pr year, she said, "Out, out, out." Yet she took her p signed away part of the sovereignty of Northern Ire that iniquitous diktat without any consultation wh with the ordinary people of Northern Ireland. We w consulted.

From that day, Margaret Thatcher was on the hill. After that, she had trouble with her Cabin trouble on all sides. Day by day she adopted the a that she had adopted in Northern Ireland—that sh ignore the people and get away with it. But we ignore the people.

Today, all those who were so strong in putting f the Anglo-Irish Agreement have disappeared politics, except one who is running for office. In th of Ireland, the initiator of the agreement has gone replacement says that the agreement needs to be r and that articles 2 and 3 of the constitution nee changed. We have a new President in the south of who resigned from the Irish Labour party on the i the agreement. Slowly but surely, the right of the pe express themselves will prevail. That is what is hap to the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

How can I, at the end of tonight's debate, go Lobby and say that I have confidence in the Gover My conscience would not allow me to do so, be should be flying in the face of the cries of orpha widows from an agonised Ulster which would nev its present plight but for that agreement. We have look at the figures. The Anglo-Irish Agreement was five years ago. That year, there were 54 killings. I the House that the number of killings was sp downwards before the agreement was signe following year, the number of killings increased to the next year to 93. The year after that, it was 9 Then it fell to 62, but this year, even before we December, there have been 71 killings.

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (M Brooke): I will ask the hon. Gentleman the same q

that I asked the hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis), who made a similar point in our debate on Monday night. Has the hon. Gentleman also noted the coincidence between the years to which he has referred and the years when the Provisional IRA received massive armaments from Gaddafi of Libya?

Rev. Ian Paisley: There may be some connection. I have great respect for the right hon. Gentleman as I have been in a series of talks with him and found him open and forthcoming, but it was claimed that the agreement would bring about peace, stability and reconciliation. The right hon. Gentleman stays in the Province, continually goes about it, meets the bereaved people and sees the security forces, so he knows that we do not have peace, stability or reconciliation. People are at loggerheads with each other. Five years ago we were told that peace would break out, but it has not. What is more, we were promised proper extradition from the Irish Republic and that those who committed atrocities would be brought back and judged properly. The right hon. Gentleman knows what a fiasco that promise has been.

It was interesting that when the Prime Minister recounted her past achievements she did not mention the Anglo-Irish Agreement. Today, the right hon. Gentleman has said that the Government will consider a replacement for the agreement if it is possible. I trust that that policy will be pursued with great eagerness and dedication by all concerned because from the Province there comes today a cry for help.

Some hon. Members may think that Protestant paramilitaries, so called and wrongly called so, and the security forces are responsible in large measure for those who are killed. That is not so. Of all the murders of the past five years, 74·5 per cent. were slaughtered by the Irish Republican Army. One hundred and nineteen—41 per cent.—were Roman Catholics. At a recent conference, the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume), who is not present, pointed out that the IRA was responsible for killing more of its own people and co-religionists than anyone else in Northern Ireland. Those are the facts.

The Unionists disagreed greatly with the Prime Minister on the further issue that Sunday should be a special day. The House knows what happened on that. The votes from Northern Ireland stopped the legislation going through the House. There was a division between the Prime Minister and the Ulster Unionists—a division which united my party and the Ulster Unionist party. We fought on a common manifesto and pledged to the people that we had no other option but to go against the Government on that policy. Tonight my hon. Friends and I will do so again because of our convictions.

I largely agree with the Prime Minister about Europe. I have not sat in all the elected Parliaments of Europe, with the largest vote recorded for any member of any party in Europe, not to understand what is going on in Europe. I do not want this House to become a county council with Mr. Delors telling us that 80 per cent. of our Acts of Parliament will be passed by bureaucrats in Brussels. That is not British democracy. The hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) should be heeded when he tells us to find out what 1992 is really about—the single market. There are many things over which the House will have no power. Tonight the House must reconsider that issue. The Prime Minister has been right in her attitude. In Europe, I find that it is all right to be a Frenchman and fight for France, it is all right to be a German and fight fo Germany, but to be a Britisher and fight for this Unite Kingdom is apparently wrong.

7.50 pm

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): This debate is lon overdue. It gives the House an opportunity to look bac over a decade of Conservative Government. What ha emerged—I am not sure whether Conservative Member realise this—is that the Conservatives have had stron messages from their supporters and from the electo suggesting that they cannot win with the leader who the have so loyally supported. We shall vote for a motion o no confidence, but the Conservative party has already ha its motion of no confidence.

I do not believe that we should attach that motion t the personality of the Prime Minister because it is th policies that she has pursued, not her style, which have le to the message from the British people. I do not believe i scapegoats and it is important that we should understan that every present and former member of the Cabine every Conservative Member of Parliament who ha trooped through the Lobby night after night after night i support of those policies, every newspaper that ha supported the Government and every voter who voted fo them share responsibility for the current situation.

So much has been said about the past that I want t speak about the future, but it would be wrong to let th motion of censure go by without touching on some of th damage that has been done in the past decade. I mus admit that the mechanical recitation of statistics does no get near the real world.

One important point about which we rarely hear is tha Britain has spent far too much money on defence and no enough on its industrial development. There is the illusio that the only reason for change in eastern Europe i Britain's possession of a nuclear weapon. Is it honestl believed by any serious person that there would have bee no demand for liberty in Poland, Hungary and the Sovie Union unless we had had a nuclear weapon from th United States? But the price we paid for that high defenc expenditure has crippled our capacity to make and se what is needed.

Despite the fact that we have been told that this is a entrepreneurial society, Britain has an utter contempt fo skill. If one talks to people who dig coal and drive train or to doctors, nurses, dentists or toolmakers, one discover that no one in Britain is interested in them. The whole o the so-called entrepreneurial society is focused on the Cit news that we get in every bulletin which tells us what ha happened to £ sterling to three decimal points against th basket of European currencies. Skill is what built thi country's strength, but it has been treated with contempt

I must confess that the auctioning of public assets particularly the latest disgusting Frankenstein advertise ment, told me more about the mentality of the Minister who devised those schemes than the sales themselves Those assets were built up by the labour of those who worl in the electricity industry and by the taxpayer who investe in the equipment. Those assets are now to be auctioned a half their value to make a profit for a tax cut for the ric before the next general election. If Ministers were loca councillors they would be before the courts for wilfu misconduct, but because they are Ministers and becaus some of them later go on to the boards of the companie

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they privatised, they are treated as business men who know better how to handle those companies as members of the board of directors than allegedly they did as the Ministers responsible.

Local government has been crippled. Across the river is the county hall of London county council—the seat of government of the greatest city in the world. It is empty and is to be sold because the Government wanted to cripple local government, and they have. The poll tax, the centralisation of the business rate and the punishment of Liverpool and Lambeth councillors were designed to take all power from local government and to put it in the hands of the Government who claimed that they did not believe in the role of the state.

Many people—I am one of them—feel strongly about the undermining of the trade unions, who now have fewer rights than their counterparts in eastern Europe, the tax cuts for the rich and the benefit cuts for the poor, the censorship of the media, the abuse practised by the security services, the restriction on civil liberties, the Falklands war and now the Government's readiness to send more troops, announced today, to the middle east to die for the control of oil. We are not alone in our concern about those issues because the message reaching Conservative Members has come from those who share that concern.

When we look back at the 1980s we see many victims of market forces. I do not share the general view that market forces are the basis of political liberty. Every time I see a homeless person living in a cardboard box in London I see that person as a victim of market forces. Every time I see a pensioner who cannot manage, I know that he is a victim of market forces. The sick who are waiting for medical treatment that they could receive quicker through private insurance are victims of those same market forces.

The Prime Minister is a great ideologue. Her strength was that she understood a certain view of life, and when she goes there will be a great ideological vacuum. It is no good saying that we shall run market forces better than she did because her whole philosophy was that one should measure the price of everything, but the value of nothing. We must replace that philosophy.

Mr. Gorbachev and Mr. Walesa must be more worried than anyone to discover that the Prime Minister on whom they have modelled their economic policy has collapsed at the very moment she had persuaded them that that was the way forward to political success. To put it crudely, the Berlin wall has fallen in London today and changes will be made which will go further than the Conservative party yet realises.

It is important to put on the record all those people who have been denounced in the past 10 years as loonies, extremists and as the "enemy within". They saw earlier than others the meaning behind the Government's policies. They include the miners and the miners' wives who fought against the injustice of closing pits and going for nuclear power and imported coal——

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke) *rose*——

Mr. Benn: I shall not give way for the moment. They include the Greenham common women. I was in court when those women were charged with action likely to cause a breach of the peace. They were outside the camp while inside were enough nuclear weapons to humanity. They were the pioneers of the defea Prime Minister.

Mr. Bennett *rose*——

Mr. Benn: Let me finish my list, then t Gentleman can intervene and make a fool of hin

What about the ambulance workers and t workers at Wapping, the single-parent mothers, th and the people who came to Trafalgar square on 3 for the poll tax demonstration? They reflect w Henley candidate picked up and tried to use at a la to his advantage. The teachers and those who defend the national health service were all together as the enemy within. In fact, they were carriers of the message that the Tory party has fin

To put it in language that will be fam Conservative Members, the Labour party believ traditional values of society—in the idea that responsibilities one to another and that we are greedy all the time, looking out only for o Without being personal, the philosophy that h propagated over the past 10 years has been wic evil. I am not talking about the qualities of the pe advocated those policies. But to set man again woman against woman and country against cou to build on nationalism and racism—we remem warning about how we would be "swamp immigrants—and all the damage that has been do Conservatives has been disgraceful.

All that will have to be dealt with. It would b repeal all their legislation. I have a measure c Margaret Thatcher (Global Repeal) Bill which, if majority, could go through both Houses in 24 would be easy to reverse the policies and rep personalities—the process has begun—but th values that have been propagated from the pla political power in Britain during the past 10 yea an infection—a virulent strain of right-wing thinking which it will take time to overcome.

I had an experience the other day which confi view that the Prime Minister has not really cha thinking or culture of the British people. I do n how many hon. Members travel, as I do, on trains regularly on them and I see all the little business their calculators working out their cash flow fore I see frowning people glaring at each other. Thatcherite trains—the trains of the competitiv

On the way from Chesterfield the other day broke down and suddenly everything seemed to Somebody came into the carriage and said, "W like a cup of tea from my thermos?" People loo each other's children, and after a young couple speaking to me for perhaps half an hour, I ask "Have you been married long?" They replied, "W the train." Another woman asked somebody, " get off at Derby and phone my son in Swansea, b will be worried?" By the time we got to London a socialist train.

One cannot change human nature. There is bad in everybody, and for 10 years the bad stimulated and the good denounced as lunati touch, cloud-cuckoo-land, extremist and milit Conservatives in power have been the cause of t do not quite yet know what has happened. They

they are witnessing the retirement of a popular headmistress under circumstances that some might regret. In fact, they have killed the source of their own philosophy and opened the way for different ideas.

We must now look to the 1990s and beyond. Most people have modest aspirations. They want useful work and a home to live in, and they would like good education for themselves and their children, with proper health care, decent pensions and peace and dignity when they are old. In a rich country—we are often told how rich we are—that should be available if the distribution of wealth were correct.

With that in mind, let us look at the world today. America, which has 2 per cent. of the world's population, uses 25 per cent. of the world's resources. For how long can that last? One does not need a Saddam Hussein or a Gaddafi to point out that maldistribution of wealth is the greatest source of international conflict. So we must look to a United Nations that is not just there to launch a war under American auspices, but is there to solve the problems that lead to war. It must help to redistribute the resources of the world.

I must speak about Europe because, after all, we are all Europeans. But I will not give up the right of the people whom I represent to decide the laws under which we are governed. I will not do that, and I have no right to do so. I only borrowed my powers from Chesterfield, and at the end of five years I must hand them back. It will be no good my saying, "I am handing back some of them. The rest I gave to Europe". I was going to say that I had given them to Jacques Delors, although I do not know why we always refer to him. I could say that I had given them to Leon Brittan or Bruce Millan. Why must we always concentrate on Frenchmen? I am not giving Leon Brittan, Helmut Kohl, Mr. Pöhl or anyone else those powers because they are not mine to give away.

In saying that, I am not being a nationalist. I am an internationalist. I believe in a Europe that co-operates in harmony. But we have no right to destroy democracy in Britain to build greater power for the bankers or anybody else in Europe. If people suggest that that argument does not spread across the Floor of the House, they must be living in a strange world.

We must shift the money from weapons to development. We must protect the planet from the dangers that are associated with nationalism, fundamentalism, particularism and racism, for those, combined with nuclear and chemical weapons, could destroy the human race. During this century, since the year 1900, humanity has been re-equipped with a new set of tools and, as a result, our institutions have been outdated.

There is the No Turning Back group—I believe that that was the battle cry of the Gadarene swine—but what has changed it all is a factor that cannot be measured on a "Newsnight" computer. With the events of today, there is a great influx of hope. People who saw no chance of a home, of a better pension or of decent health care have seen the light at the end of the tunnel. It is not the light of the little flickering candles of the three candidates. It is a different sort of light.

When I campaigned in the 1945 election, we never thought that we could win. Churchill, after all, was far more popular than the present Prime Minister. He had won the war single-handed smoking a big cigar and wearing a siren suit. Although we did not think that we could beat him, we did. Mr. Attlee was a modest man—Churchill described him contemptuously as a modest man with a lot to be modest about—but we won.

I was at Transport house in London when the results came in. In those days there was no television, no computers and no polls to mislead us. The news was shown on an epidiascope; we wrote the results on a bit of smoked glass and flashed them up. Ministers fell like ninepins and out of the darkness from Northolt came the little man, Clement Attlee, and he became Prime Minister. That was achieved by hope.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) referred to the Norway debate on 7 and 8 May 1940. Chamberlain was the victor and two days later Churchill became Prime Minister. That was the verdict of Parliament on the 1930s. Five years later, after the war, when the people had a chance to decide, Churchill was out, there was a Labour Government and an attempt to build a better society.

We are going through that sequence again. Tonight the Government will win an overwhelming majority and in a few days from now, whoever of the three pygmies wins the leadership, he will not be able to deny the British people the hope that will be released by the defeat of the present Prime Minister. That hope will carry into power a Government who will face such massive problems that their radicalism will far exceed that to be found, at present, in our printed policy reviews.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. The wind-up speeches are expected to begin at 9 o'clock. Many hon. Members still wish to take part in the debate. I appeal once more for brief speeches, please.

8.7 pm

Sir Eldon Griffiths (Bury St. Edmunds): An agreeable feature of the House is that, despite the cataclysmic events of the last 72 hours, certain things remain the same.

In the 27 years that I have had the privilege to be here, I have heard an endless series of speeches from some of the heavyweights on the Opposition Benches. Today, the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) made a vintage Foot speech; the worst Chancellor of the Exchequer that the country has had since the war, the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey), told us all about economic policy; and the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) made one of his speeches telling us about the future while dwelling on the achievements of Mr. Attlee in 1945.

An interesting feature has been that, with all those heavyweight speeches, there has been from the Opposition Benches only one lightweight, lousy speech that did not rise to the occasion, and that was the one made by the Leader of the Opposition. From what we heard today, it is clear that the Leader of the Opposition does not know what he is talking about.

I have been involved in four Conservative leadership contests. The first was when Harold Macmillan was replaced by Lord Home. I was in Blackpool and travelled down on a train—not a socialist train—with Mr. and Mrs. Rab Butler, Reggie Manningham-Buller, and a detective. When we set off from Blackpool, Rab was quite certain that, on his arrival in London, he would go on to become Prime Minister. Shortly after we arrived in London, I

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heard from certain members of the then 1922 Executive Committee that he was not going to be Prime Minister—and nor was he.

One lesson that I learned from those events is that not only is a week a long time in politics, but 24 hours can be a very long time too. The second lesson that I have learnt from the various leadership contests in which I have been involved is that, although at the time they seem damaging, as well as fascinating and engage all our interests, in the long run they do nothing to damage the essential integrity of purpose and character or the electoral fortunes of the Conservative party.

The best demonstration of that is that, although we have had four leadership problems in the 27 years that I have been a Member of this House—with the exception of the two aberrant periods when Labour Governments were in power—the British people have chosen freely to install Conservative Governments. I believe that they will continue to do so.

Of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, I say only three things. First, I believe her to be and to have been the best and the finest thing that has happened to this country over the past 50 years.

Mr. Terry Lewis (Worsley): You came back from America to stab her in the back.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: I did not.

In my period in the House, I have formed the conclusion that we shall not, in my lifetime, see my right hon. Friend's equal again.

Mr. Skinner *rose*——

Sir Eldon Griffiths: No, I shall not give way. You, Mr. Deputy Speaker, have asked us to be brief.

Mr. Skinner: The hon. Gentleman stabbed the Prime Minister in the back this morning in a letter to *The Times*.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will allow me to follow the request of the Chair and to be brief.

Secondly, I believe that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, characteristically, did the right thing at the right time. After the speech of my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Surrey, East (Sir G. Howe) and after the withholding of support in the first round of the ballot by 152 members of the 1922 Committee, it was inevitable that my right hon. Friend should make room at the top so that someone else could emerge. She did the right thing, the inevitable thing, and she did it with grace, courage and dignity.

We now have the prospect of three of my right hon. Friends being candidates to follow my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. Each of them is well equipped to achieve the two priorities that my right hon. Friend mentioned in her statement of resignation. She spoke first of the need for unity in our party and secondly of the need to win the next election. Any of my three right hon. Friends whose names are now in contention could reunite our party quickly. I believe that they will review and improve the poll tax and get on top of inflation. I make this prediction too—they will put our party in a position to win the next election.

The primary reason for the motion of no confidence is that, deep down, the Leader of the Opposition——

Mr. Lewis *rose*——

Sir Eldon Griffiths: If the hon. Gentleman mind, I shall not give way, because I have undertaking to conclude shortly.

Deep down, the Leader of the Opposition kn bones that he is not going to win.

I should like to touch briefly on two matte high on the Government's agenda. The first is have a stepson who is on HMS Cardiff in the G third trip, and I am proud of him. I also rep constituency from which much of the Tornado many of the American F111s left for Sau Obviously, therefore, I have an interest. I welcome the statement today by my right hon. Secretary of State for Defence, but I should lik couple of questions which require a response.

First, why, so far, has no British aircraft c deployed in that area when we have citizens smaller vessels that require air cover? Although States fleet is well able to provide all that, I sho know why the Royal Navy has not so far seen fi one of its aircraft carriers. I cannot think wha ships are doing or where else in the world ther important place for one of them to be.

Secondly, it is important that our troops out better access to telephones so that they can spe dependants back home. The American army strong—it numbers between 300,000 and 400, —but the United States is providing free telep not only for the troops to call home, b dependants at home to telephone the troop Arabia. We should do no less for our own s

Thirdly, it cannot be right that so many of out there are worried about the community ch continues to be levied on their dependent fa home. I am well aware of the six-month rule, b many of our troops hope not to be out there fo that, I hope that the Government will do more the community charge that is levied on our s and will do so as a matter of morale.

The most important point about the Gulf is now standing shoulder to shoulder with our Ar other allies to achieve the result that the Unit has demanded of Saddam Hussein. To those Members who have said today that we should those troops, I say that one clear lesson has em the cold war. In Europe, we prepared for war secure peace. That strategy has paid off. The S has come to the conference table. We now security situation in Europe and a new prosp because of the strength of the alliance. Surely t must also apply in the Gulf. It is the strength forces that have been sent there and their abi war, if need be, on which we can pin most of o a peaceful settlement.

I turn in conclusion to the economy. I across the world we are about to see an econon We can see the signs developing in parts of States, with the failure of the President and achieve a settled budget, the inability of the U to overcome the overhang of its deficit downward turn in American investment and For the first time, the great economic machine

also beginning to pause and perhaps to move backwards. There is great nervousness about the fall in real estate prices in Tokyo and the falls on the Tokyo stock exchange.

Germany, too, has the beginnings of economic problems. The right hon. Member for Chesterfield and one of my hon. Friends have referred to the problems in the German economy, which is overstretched by the need to refurbish, rewire and rebuild the economies of eastern Europe.

All these are signs that an economic blizzard could confront the entire world, including this country.

There has seldom been a time when we had greater need for effective and modern government at the centre of our affairs. It is the duty of our party, first and foremost and as rapidly as possible, to agree a new leader, to install a new and effective Cabinet, to set out policies and to proceed to manage our national affairs and our part in the emerging world order so that we can safeguard our people from the ultimate disaster, which would be the return of a Labour Government.

8.19 pm

Mr. Giles Radice (Durham, North): The circumstances that have led to the resignation of the Prime Minister have been rather like the unrolling of a Greek tragedy. Ever since that fateful Tuesday when the right hon. Lady went ape in the House on her return from Rome, events have led almost inexorably to her political demise. The resignation and then the powerful resignation statement to this House by the right hon. and learned Member for Surrey, East (Sir G. Howe); the astonishing result—very bad for the Conservatives—of the Bradford by-election—I pay tribute in passing to my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, North (Mr. Rooney) for his excellent maiden speech; then the official announcement by the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) that he would stand against the Prime Minister; then the evasive reply last weekend by the Foreign Secretary about whether he would stand in the second ballot; and then the result on Tuesday in which the Prime Minister failed to win a first ballot victory; and finally yesterday, the coup de grace, a palace coup by the majority of the Cabinet against the Prime Minister—this was the sequence of events. I knew something was up last night when I heard two members of the Cabinet, ostensibly the Prime Minister's loyalist supporters, openly discussing in the No Lobby how best to remove her—[HON. MEMBERS: "Name them."] I shall not. Surely this was a classic example of

"where two or three are gathered together in my name".

If I had not heard or seen this, I would not have believed it.

It has all been more extraordinary than any soap opera. The right hon. Lady was brought down for her refusal to consult her colleagues and because of the way in which she ran her Cabinet. She was brought down because of her views on Europe, and above all she was brought down because of her Government's unpopularity. The Tory party wanted to save its skin, so it ditched the Prime Minister. There is nothing so disloyal as the Tory party in a funk, as we have clearly seen today.

Whatever one feels about the Prime Minister, she is undoubtedly one of the biggest trees in the Westminster jungle. She is rumoured to have said that she is the only man in her Cabinet. I see her point. She has certainly dominated and often ignored her colleagues over a gre many years. We have the testimony of the right hon. a learned Member for Surrey, East on that point.

After the career of the right hon. Lady no one will ev be able to say again that a woman is not capable of holdi the top job in politics. We all, whatever our views, owe h that debt. I hope to see another lady as Prime Minister, b a lady from the Opposition this time, and I hope that it w happen before my political career is over.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): Is the hon. Gentlem mounting a coup?

Mr. Radice: There may be a vacancy in the ho Gentleman's party: there is none in ours.

Future historians will give the right hon. Lady credit f her personal success. I suspect, however, that they will much less impressed by her achievements or by t enduring nature of her legacy. For all its political succ in the 1980s, a success which owed as much to divisio among the Opposition as to the merits of the Thatcher approach, the truth is that Thatcherism is a remarkab limited political approach.

Let us consider the record. On the economic front, it true that North sea oil permitted a number of years economic growth, but the massive current account defic the big trade imbalance in manufactured goods, hi inflation, rising unemployment and the approach recession all underline the fact that we have seve economic and industrial difficulties. What is more, after years, the right hon. Lady and the Government do n begin to have convincing solutions to crucial problems f Britain's future, such as the weakness of our hig technology industries, our poor performance in ci research and development and, above all, our who inadequate system of education and training.

The Prime Minister's approach to welfare and pub services is deeply flawed. It is one thing, and perfec correct, to stress the need for value for money; it is qu another to argue, as the right hon. Lady consistently h for reducing public spending whatever the circumstanc to attack welfare benefits as encouraging dependency a to support market solutions, opting out and privatisati as a matter of principle. The rundown of our health a education services, the cuts in welfare benefits and t deterioriation in our public services all demonstrate t paucity of social Thatcherism.

Perhaps the most glaring indictment of Thatcher Conservatism is its failure to create one natio Throughout her years in power, the right hon. Lady h shown little concern for bringing people together. In pa that is because of her temperament—she has lit magnanimity in her make-up. To the Prime Minist anyone who is not for her is against her. She bar recognises the right of the Opposition to oppose her, a she certainly does not recognise the right of anyone in h Cabinet or in Europe to a point of view different from h own.

It is not only a question of personal attributes, howev There is a more fundamental philosophical flaw in t Thatcherite approach. The competitive individualism th has been so characteristic of Thatcherism is so unbalanc that it hardly recognises one person's obligation another, or the existence of society. So it is not surprisi

[Mr. Radice]

that it has nothing to say to the unemployed or the sick, to the inner cities or the ethnic minorities, or to the whole northern part of the British Isles.

Thatcherism has proved wholly incapable of uniting the country, yet strangely it is Thatcherism which all the candidates in the second round propose to carry on. Even the right hon. Member for Henley, who has tried skilfully to distance himself from many aspects of the Tory record, assures us—as he did on Sunday in the "On the Record" programme—that he is building on Thatcherism and carrying it on into the next decade.

This country needs not the continuation of Thatcherism but its demise. That is why we need a new, Labour Government who, inspired by a more generous, humane and creative approach, will start to address the agenda of the 1990s.

8.28 pm

Mr. Richard Alexander (Newark): It is a privilege to take part in this historic debate. None of us who serve in Parliament, regardless of our party, will ever forget how we learned of today's announcement with shock. Tory Members learned of it with sadness because a distinguished parliamentarian has told us of her intention to give up her high office. It would be unfortunate, however, if we treated today's debate as though it were an obituary. Most hon. Members were in the House for my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's speech. They know that if she had not given up her intention to stay on she would probably have been successful in the next round. Even though my right hon. Friend has resigned, a great politician is still available to give great service to this country.

Some Opposition Members have given us a slanted view of history. Some have said that on Tuesday she was defeated by her own party, but those of us who saw the figures know that that is not so—she won the election by a handsome majority.

Mr. Skinner: Who did the hon. Gentleman vote for?

Mr. Alexander: I proudly voted for the Prime Minister. I am quite happy to answer oafish challenges by Opposition Members who are trying to upstage me by suggesting that I was disloyal.

I have referred to the Opposition's version of history. We heard a version of the history of the last 11 years in the speech of the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), who presented a completely slanted view and then promptly left the House, leaving hon. Members to chew over his speech. There is another view of those 11 years, and that is why the motion should be rejected.

In the past 11 years Britain's economy has been transformed, as those of us who were adults in 1979 will appreciate. Even our strong critic in the CBI, the director-general, said recently that the 1970s was an era of relative economic decline and social disintegration and that we were entering the 1990s with the economy in incomparably better shape than at any time in our history.

Let us look at some of the Government's achievements. Almost 400,000 new businesses have been created and every week more new businesses are created than those which fail. There are fewer strikes than at any time in our history, and many fewer than in the halcyon days of the Labour Government portrayed by some Members. There are more people in work tha and more investment by Japanese, American companies. They do not invest here because us up at knockdown prices. They cannot and that. They are investing not because of more handouts, such as those that were availa Labour Government, but because over the Britain has become wedded to free enterpris sensible industrial relations. Britain has bee and people find it worth coming here, being and investing in it.

When we start our new era, as we are whichever leader of my party takes office, w firm look at the policy that has caused ou and the Opposition most distress—some community charge. I voted for the commun I think that I would vote for it again becau of personal responsibility for the services th important. The concept is right. However, few months I have talked to constituents and results of the community charge. I have se older, perhaps retired couple with a sma capital and a small income, and for a young the wife cannot go out to work because of children, the charge is a burden. It is unfo their declining years people find that educa their community charge burden. I know down side to removing the cost of educa community charge and transferring resp direction from county hall to the D Education and Science, but it is the price tha to pay if we are to make more sense, create and make the charge relate more to ability

The exaggerated comments of Oppositio not contribute much to our debate. The Opposition said that my party was riddle That is not so. We have disagreements abo integration with Europe, but I cannot think items of policy on which we are riddled with were so, we would have heard about it an talking about it in the Lobby . We shall b vote at the end of this debate.

The Opposition need a policy if they credible but they have not outlined one in have heard whining and have been given a of history and nothing else. The motion is th fox and my right hon. Friend the Pri announcement has been instrumental in s motion is bogus and unwanted and I urge h to reject it.

8.37 pm

Mr. Denis Howell (Birmingham, Sma right hon. Friends the Members for Blaen Foot) and for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) speeches and it is a privilege to speak in a they have participated. It was said of nothing so became him in this life as the passing. If I am wrong on that, I am sur hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gw me. The same can certainly be said of the because she has also lost her head. Charles

which was the destruction of Parliament. After the Prime Minister has gone, we may perhaps re-establish the democratic virtues of Parliament.

Whoever wins the Conservative contest should make a move to end the corruption of public life from which Britain has suffered for the past 10 years. The most corrupt question in that time was, "Is he one of us?" That question has got rid of people on sports councils, water authorities, countryside commissions, nature conservancy boards and health authorities. I hope that we shall see principle re-established and that people who have a contribution to make to the great institutions of the nation will be allowed to do so, even if we do not agree with their views. That is one of my great hopes.

I was appalled to hear the Prime Minister defending the Government's record on pensions, saying that everyone is better off and that she wanted the poor to be poorer. We should take a few minutes in this debate to discuss the morality and ethics of the Government. Any Government who take pleasure in impoverishing the worst off are a Government with no claim to decency or morality. I represent the centre of the city of Birmingham and I see acute poverty. After 10 years of Conservative government, my constituency has the highest infant mortality in Europe —23 deaths per 1,000 live births. That is a disgrace to us all, but especially to the Government who have presided over such a situation.

The official measurement of poverty is those on 100 per cent. of benefit levels. In the past 10 years, the number of people living at or below that level has increased by nearly 10 per cent.—from 22 to 30 per cent. Worst off of all are the pensioners. I am glad that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition mentioned a factor which I hope will become part of our general election campaign—that if we had signed the social contract and then observed it, every married pensioner couple would be £13·50 per week better off and every single pensioner £10 per week better off. Breaking the link between earnings and pensions was a dastardly thing to do, as these figures show. Figures such as those must be given in this debate.

The poll tax is a great evil. It is a bureaucratic nightmare which costs an enormous amount to administer. Even if the poll tax itself decreases, that cost will remain. We all know that local authorities cannot get the software to administer the charge, and we know that collection charges have doubled. In Birmingham alone, the staff of 250 needed to collect the rates has increased to 550 for collecting the poll tax. Other aspects of the poll tax are equally nonsensical. People move, from Bradford to Birmingham or from Birmingham to other places, and we do not have the facilities to trace them and ensure that they meet their obligations. That it is both a lunatic and immoral tax is shown by the fact that pensioners, single parents and other poor people have to pay the same as those who are affluent.

Another example of the Government's attitude is their treatment of the health service. Birmingham is almost completely united against plans to reorganise hospital provision in the city. Yet the 10 out of 12 Birmingham Members of Parliament, the entire city council, the 250,000 or more who have signed the petition against the closing of some of our hospitals, particularly the general hospital, have all been ignored. When I spoke to the new Secretary of State yesterday to ask whether he intended to confirm plans to close the general hospitals as such a move would be disgraceful and result in some of his colleagues losing their seats because the closure would be a general election issue, he told me that he had eit approve it now or to postpone approval until aft general election. That is another example of corrup Government. The case has not been decided on its

In their attempts to rebuild the hospital on the Elizabeth site, the Government have forgotten th trustees for the site have given Birmingham city cou right of veto over any building on the site that wo left if the Queen Elizabeth hospital were knocked The leader of the council, Councillor Sir Richard Kn has authorised me to say that in no circumstances a Labour council—nor, I trust, would a Conse council—agree to any plans for buildings on that si Conservative party may not like it, but I predic Birmingham Members will lose their seats on that

There has been a downturn in the economy of th midlands. I am fed up with hearing Ministers say t Government will get inflation down because they done it before. Who put it up? Who has presided high rate of inflation? Who put up gas, electrici water charges? Who imposed the poll tax? W responsible for those policies, which have led to inc costs and inevitably to increased mortgage charges

We are locked into a ridiculous situation which v hon. Members representing midlands constituencie went into the ERM too late and, as the cham commerce and the Engineering Employers Fede have told me, at a rate which is far too high and wil future orders. I will not bore the House, but I have statistics here about the future of export orders, which we should all be concerned. They show a dow in orders and deliveries, not just for the constructi manufacturing industries—we are used to that—bu whole range of goods.

In terms of morality and practicality, the da Government go to the next election, which will be day to soon, they will be replaced by a Governmen higher standards of ethics and business practice. T what the nation needs.

8.48 pm

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): As a Member for the great city of Bradford, I congratul newly elected Member for Bradford, North (Mr. R on an excellent maiden speech. He is honoured to s the House for the Bradford, North constituency, an sure that Conservative Members will have take lessons that are to be learned from his election. I a that the hon. Member will recall the outstanding service of his predecessors—Geoffrey Lawler a William Taylor from the Conservative party, a friend Ben Ford from the Labour party. We all mou recent passing of Pat Wall.

The Leader of the Opposition said that there w innocents on the Government Benches. No one o Benches who has endured the political agony of the days would wish ever to go through them again. M hon. Friend the Prime Minister has demonstrated fo an example of courage, indomitable endurance rigorous intellectual self-discipline which few of us even emulate, let alone match. All of us an constituents owe my right hon. Friend a debt of gra She has entrusted us, her right hon. and hon. Friend the challenge of how best we can build o

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Government's manifold achievements of the 1980s. It will be a formidable task, but I believe that her party will be worthy of the torch which she has passed on.

To be worthy, we must not fight yesterday's battles or indulge in recriminations over the past. In recent years, the Government, with the support of the British people, have overcome the abuse of monopoly trade union power. I do not believe that any reasonable person would like to see the clock put back to closed shops and intimidatory mass picketing. Even the right to buy council houses is accepted now by the Labour party, albeit with some reluctance, perhaps, in some quarters. I suspect that most Opposition Members of the more pragmatic Labour party of today realise that the British people will not readily accept the reimposition of a clause 4 nationalisation programme. The Labour party's policy pronouncements, such as they are, seem to demonstrate that.

The Leader of the Opposition asked, "Who could ever trust the Tory party again?" If we could not adapt our policies to the issues which confront us now, we would not be worthy of public confidence. We all recognise in our hearts of hearts what they are—the despoiling of the environment, the continued and lamentable decay of our inner cities and the detested and often flouted system of local government finance, a political albatross if ever there was one. We all know to what I am referring—the dreaded poll tax.

There is a need to find a better and more efficient way of funding an increasingly centralised pattern of state education. Above all, there is the necessity to translate our vision of Europe, constructively and positively, into one which is understood and eventually shared by our Community partners. This will require give and take, effort and imagination and much political sensitivity on our part.

The process of making our continent more prosperous, secure and universally democratic and free is a many-faceted one. The breakdown of the inhumane, ideological and physical divisions of our continent has undoubtedly owed much to a strong western defence. I hope that we in the United Kingdom will imaginatively help to forge through the Western European Union a stronger European element in our Atlantic alliance as the arms control process and Gulf commitments will necessarily diminish the American military presence in Europe, upon which we have relied for so long.

We should not forget that the European Community has proved a powerful magnet for the democratising countries of central and eastern Europe, which badly need the prosperity which perhaps we have come to take for granted here and elsewhere in the EEC.

There are other aspects of European policy that are important. The Council of Europe is an invaluable bridge between east and west. I hope, now that Hungary has joined as a full member, the other countries of central and eastern Europe will follow suit, and that the successor to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister will take the earliest opportunity to address the parliamentary assembly of the Council of Europe.

The European Community's economic and monetary union is an objective worth pursuing. If we wish the British means of securing it to carry conviction, however, we cannot always be the wet blanket, the little Johnnie permanently out of step. I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer understands this, as does my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs. I hope that they will continue their good work in their present positions as avoiding isolation must surely be a prime objective of British diplomacy. Certainty of purpose too will be essential if the Government are to carry credibility in future. I urge the House to reject the motion.

8.56 pm

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): In the three minutes available to me, I wish to place on record a personal appreciation of the Prime Minister. At the height of the Cleveland child abuse crisis, the right hon. Lady agreed with the then Minister for Health that there should be a judicial inquiry. She was kind enough to raise with me the progress of that inquiry when she visited Middlesbrough in the autumn of 1987. She raised it again with me on another occasion when we met. Along with my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition, the Prime Minister at all times took an interest in what was happening at the inquiry. She came to the House to support the then Minister for Health when he announced the findings of the inquiry. She was instrumental in ensuring that the Children Bill was part of the legislative programme for 1989, and that measure is now on the statute book.

We now have legislation that seeks to achieve the right balance between children under threat and families which may be involved in allegations. We have appropriate guidelines for doctors, social workers and police officers. We have multi-disciplinary proceedings and a more rapid family court procedure to ensure that the interests of children do not suffer as a result of legal proceedings. The Prime Minister's role should not go unsung and I place on record my appreciation, that of the parents who were caught up in the dispute and that of the children for her interest and role in these matters.

We should not, however, allow to enter into the political folklore the sentiment that the Prime Minister was the greatest peacetime Prime Minister this century. That role falls to Clement Attlee in the years from 1945 to 1951. The Prime Minister was never a "One Nation" Tory; she was a "Two Nations" Tory. She could never reconcile the variety of interests, pressures and demands of society.

In one of the asides for which she became famous—referred to by my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn)—she said in 1976, as Leader of the Opposition, that this country would be swamped by members of a foreign culture.

In 1979, the right hon. Lady discarded the policy that had guided all the western nations throughout the 1970s —that of trying to keep down inflation and unemployment —by making the attack on inflation the only attack. Consequently, unemployment rose beyond 2 million to 3 million. Although we got inflation down, the unemployed saw their prospects and those of their families sadly diminish. Inflation has not been defeated; it is returning, because the Prime Minister did not follow the advice of her Chancellor and her Foreign Secretary when they asked her to enter the exchange rate mechanism. History will not be kind to the Prime Minister; it will be more cruel than it looks now.

I commend the motion to the House. As was said by the *Evening Standard*—a Conservative paper—there should be an immediate election on the basis of the Government's policies and their politics.

9 pm

Mr. Roy Hattersley (Birmingham, Sparkbrook): I begin by offering my sincere congratulations to my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, North (Mr. Rooney), who made a maiden speech of amazing confidence, admirable lucidity and enviable certainty. When I briefly worked for him in Bradford a month ago, I knew that he was good, although I must confess that I did not realise that he was that good. It is the habit of Front-Bench spokesmen to tell maiden speakers how much the House looks forward to hearing them in the future. I not only look forward to hearing my hon. Friend many times, but have no doubt that we will hear from him many times—and, as far as I am concerned, the more often the better.

I have disagreed with most of what the Prime Minister has done since I shadowed her when she was Secretary of State for Education and Science nearly 20 years ago. Notwithstanding that—and notwithstanding her absence from the wind-up tonight—I gladly acknowledge her extraordinary achievement, that of leading her party to victory in three consecutive general elections. Nothing that happens now, and nothing that has happened today, can tarnish that record.

Nothing, moreover, can tarnish the other element in the Prime Minister's conduct, which we saw when she first led her party, and have seen again today. The Prime Minister remained in character to the last. Indeed, she was so much in character when she spoke this afternoon that many hon. Members on both sides of the House will be forced to ask themselves what went wrong. After 11 years of such unqualified success, unique popularity and achievement piled on achievement, why did her own party remove her from leadership?

One possible explanation is that some of her colleagues —perhaps some Cabinet members as well as some Back Benchers—began to examine the Prime Minister's statistics and check up on the claims that she makes about her record, her achievements and the years of unmitigated success.

Today she said that, during her 11 years, the tax bill had fallen. That is wrong: it has risen from 34 to 37 per cent. of national income. Today she said that everyone was better off than in 1979; that too is wrong. The least well-paid 10 per cent. of the population are, in real terms, 5·7 per cent. worse off than they were when she came to power. Today she said that, during her eleven and a half years, Britain had moved up the European growth league. That is wrong. We have moved down. In 1978, in the last year of a Labour Government, we stood second, with 3·7 per cent. annual growth; today after eleven and a half years of her Administration, we stand fourth with 0·9 per cent.

I could give other examples of how the right hon. Lady, during 11 years at the Dispatch Box, has been at best selective in her choice of figures, and at worst has simply given the House the wrong information. That is what happened today, and it is right that her valedictory address should contain all the flaws and blemishes that we have come to expect—too much certainty, not enough fact and a reckless disregard for the evidence that everyone knows to be the truth.

The other characteristic that we saw again today, and which we constantly and regularly witnessed during the past 11 years, was the Prime Minister's propensity for blaming everybody except herself. I well remember that, when the economy was set back and turned back, the Prime Minister extraordinarily announced that it was the Chancellor who had made the errors of shadowing the deutschmark and of overestimating the disadvantages of the stock exchange collapse. The idea that the right hon. Lady had any part in that, that she had anything to do with it, that she had even known that it was happening, apparently never passed through her mind.

I do not complain tonight about the Prime Minister blaming everyone except herself, because I want to talk not about the Prime Minister, but about the Administration that she led and has now left. Tonight, we shall vote on a motion of no confidence in the Government as a whole. That motion carries with it our condemnation of those Back Benchers who have supported and sustained the Government for so long. I have absolutely no doubt that next week those same Back Benchers will be whispering that they never really supported the Prime Minister, that they never really agreed with her policies, and that they had never wanted her to stay for so long. The Prime Minister was popular with Members from marginal constituencies only for as long as they believed that she would help them to hold their seats.

This week, we have witnessed a mass evacuation from a sinking ship with, appropriately enough, the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) the first over the side and swimming for the shore. It is enormously important that we put into perspective the reason why the 1922 Committee originally and, we are told, the Cabinet this morning turned against the Prime Minister. She has not been rejected because of the record balance of trade deficit or the astronomical interest rates. She has not been removed from office for the freezing of child benefit or the failing to link increases in pension to national earnings. She was not told to go because of the young unemployed sleeping in shop doorways, or the damage that the Government have done to the national health service. She was not even destroyed by the poll tax—which was reasonable, because every Conservative Member believes in it. Even the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) voted for a poll tax in Scotland.

One of the things to which I look forward during the next week or so is the right hon. Gentleman, in one of his numerous—some would say endless—television broadcasts, explaining exactly when he changed his mind and why. He will go down in history as the senior politician who changed his mind most often in one year. As he explains to his hon. Friends, as he will no doubt try to do, why there have been conceivable circumstances in which he would stand against the Prime Minister, he must also explain when the great conversion against the poll tax came about. My view is that it was at the time that the right hon. Gentleman decided that he had a real chance of a decent vote in the Conservative leadership stakes.

It is important to remember—and it is the object and the purpose of our no-confidence motion tonight—that Conservative Members still support the discredited policies on which the Prime Minister led them, and on which she would have had them fight the next general

[Mr. Roy Hattersley]

election. Of course Conservative Members will vote against our motion tonight, but by doing so they will demonstrate their continued affection for the poll tax, their agreement to the freezing of child benefit, and their belief that pensions should not be increased in line with national earnings. They will be voting for the policies that produced the highest interest rates and the worst balance of payments figures in our history.

What the Conservative party really wants is a new leader who can save its skin without changing the discredited policies, but that cannot happen. The wrapping may be changed but the contents of the package will be the same garbage as before. Whether it is tied up with Finchley barbed wire or tarnished Henley tinsel, or for that matter with an old Etonian tie, nobody will believe that it has changed. With one possible exception, Europe, to which I shall turn in a moment, the old discredited policies will remain.

Only one thing about the Tory party has radically changed during the past 11 years. When I first entered the House 25 years ago, the Conservative party did its dirty work in private. Now it is bleeding to death in public. It has been mortally wounded in a civil war fought not over great principles but over personalities and a greed for power.

We have been told time after time during this debate, and by Tories who commented on this debate before it began, that Conservative Members will all be in the same Lobby at 10 o'clock tonight. I am sure that they will.

Mr. Skinner: They will be in the same Lobby tonight, because, unlike on Tuesday when it was a private vote and they stabbed the Prime Minister in the back, tonight there will be a recorded vote. That is why they will turn back to the Prime Minister tonight.

Mr. Hattersley: My hon. Friend—I do not begrudge him it—takes the words out of my mouth. Conservative Members will be slapping each other on the back tonight and stabbing each other in the back tomorrow. I think, on reflection, that that is a rather better formulation of my hon. Friend's point.

Of course, if Conservatives do so, there will be the usual heavy helping of mass hypocrisy. At 10.33 am precisely, on London Broadcasting Company's radio, the Prime Minister was mourned with this comment:

"I am very sad to see such a distinguished career come to an end."

Believe it or not, those were the words of the right hon. Member for Henley. The uninitiated listener would not know that he had been devoting his time and considerable fortune during the past four years to bringing that career to a dead stop at the first opportunity. Yet when it seemed expedient, the right hon. Member for Henley—I use the words again because it is difficult to imagine that he really said them, but I assure the House that he did—said:

"I am very sad to see such a distinguished career come to an end."

There is a man to trust. There is a man on whom the nation can rely. There is a man on whom I at least am not prepared to turn my back.

Many of the Prime Minister's supporters have been franker about their attitudes to her future. They have described her critics as "misanthropists and malcontents". They have described her opponents as "junk". They have described her opponents and critics as "sickeningly disloyal". Today, the hon. Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe) called the Tory party "Mad, quite mad." The Minister of State for Defence Procurement denounced the 150 people who turned out a Prime Minister elected by 3 million. The hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) was "disgusted" and "horrified" and spoke of "political suicide". That was just on one programme.

In this debate, the right hon. Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow), the chairman of the 1922 Committee, said that the anger will be very slow to fade. The right hon. Member for—[HON. MEMBERS: "Cirencester and Tewkesbury."] The right hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Ridley)——

Mr. Peter Bottomley (Eltham): It is the joined-up writing of the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook, (Mr. Hattersley).

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John MacGregor): Somebody else wrote his speech.

Mr. Hattersley: If the Leader of the House would like a souvenir of this occasion, he may have a page of my notes with the greatest of pleasure.

The right hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury spoke of "shameful betrayal", a backlash already being felt in the constituencies and wounds that will not wound easily. [HON. MEMBERS: "Heal". I can see that, between us, we are determined to make these words memorable.

A comment on that attitude was made by the Chief Secretary to the Treasury the day before yesterday:

"We won't deserve to win unless we have got ourselves together."

That was before some of the comments on the Prime Minister's passing that I have just reported to the House. The Chief Secretary insists that the Tory party will not deserve to win until it gets itself together. He is right in every detail: it will not get its act together, it will not deserve to win and it will not win.

It will not win because it is bound together only by hope of office and dislike of the Labour party. Great political parties must have something in which they want to believe, rather than the hope of their members hanging on to individual seats. *[Interruption.]* I notice that the main derision of that point is coming from an hon. Gentleman who was elected as a Labour Member of Parliament.

Mr. Douglas: Does the right hon. Gentleman recall that he was one of 69 Labour Members who voted for Britain's entry into the Common Market? Does he recall the unity of the Labour party then?

Mr. Hattersley: My ex-hon. Friend reminds me that I was one of the Labour Members who broke the Whip on our entry into the European Community. I was going to confess to that in a moment, but I am glad that the hon. Gentleman has established that my record on Europe and my enthusiasm for Community membership goes back a long time.

Before dealing with that, I want to express, still in her absence, my regrets about the feelings that the Prime Minister must have had when she was sitting in the palace of Versailles on Monday night. No doubt she was thinking, "Apres moi le deluge," which when translated means, "One of my successors will almost certainly be a

wet." She must have known, as Conservative Members know, that the Administration that she bequeaths, and which will be inherited by I do not know whom, will be torn apart by personal animosities and one real issue, which, for reasons that I do not pretend to understand, has destroyed and damaged party after party—Britain's place in Europe.

The battle within the Tory party will be between two types of extremists—the little Englanders and those who have a fanatical enthusiasm for the drive towards European integration. In my view, that is an irrational and damaging enthusiasm that should be balanced against the practicalities of Britain's position in the Community. Meanwhile, the sensible, practical and moderate course will be followed by the Labour party.

Mr. Cash: Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that the Labour party has changed its position on Europe six times in the past 10 years?

Mr. Hattersley: I would not agree for a moment, although the figure of six times is clearly being issued by Conservative central office, as it has been quoted by weaker-minded Conservative Members in this debate.

I have held a view on Europe not simply since the treaty of Rome but going back to the treaty of Messina: I believe that Britain should be one of the foundation members of the Community. I have held those views consistently, and I hold them still. I offer my opinions on where the Labour party should be, and is, in my capacity as a European of unshakeable conviction and unshakeable certainty.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *rose*——

Mr. Hattersley: No, I am going to continue with my speech.

I make our position absolutely clear—not my position, but that of the Labour party: we shall neither slavishly support every European initiative, nor oppose every proposed improvement merely because it comes from the Community. We shall consider our future in Europe without the ideological blinkers which have prejudiced every reaction by the Government. We shall pursue those policies that are beneficial to Britain. That is bound to mean that we shall seek co-operation, rather than conflict, with our partners.

I shall give an example. It is absurd that we have stood out against the social charter and its action programme, with the enormous benefits that they offer to all employees, especially to working women. It is equally absurd—I want to meet this argument head on, as best I can—to suggest that the test for Europe is whether a party or an individual is in favour of an immediate single currency and an immediate central bank——

Mr. Cash: The right hon. Gentleman is generating nothing but marshmallow.

Mr. Hattersley: The hon. Gentleman has been on the losing side so often this week that I should have thought he would have shown a little humility.

Mr. Cash *rose*——

Mr. Hattersley: I repeat that I have never wavered in my view that Britain's future ought to lie in the Community, and in co-operation with it. I also repeat that the idea that we should say yes to a single currency or to a central bank is preposterous. All those Conservative Members who want an instant answer to that question had better not vote for the right hon. Member for Henley next Tuesday——

Mr. Curtiss: We are not going to.

Mr. Hattersley: I hope, Mr. Speaker, that you will accept my assurance that I did not put the hon. Member up to that.

On television on Sunday, the right hon. Member for Henley said:

"The major issues—like the creation of a powerful Central European bank, like the issue of a single currency—are not on the agenda today—"

Very sensible. It is preposterous that the argument should centre around that. What it centres around is whether we work with our partners and the other countries in Europe in Britain's best interests, or if, to pursue a cricketing metaphor—perhaps the last of this era—every time we are not allowed to be captain, opening bowler and wicket keeper, we take our bat away. That is no way to treat the Community.

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber) *rose*——

Mr. Hattersley: I want to repeat that, when we come to office—as we soon shall—we will take a pragmatic, practical and sensible view of the best interests of this country in Europe. I also want to make it clear that, when we come to office, we shall abolish the poll tax. We shall replace it with a property-based tax, which also takes account of a family's ability to pay.

On Tuesday, *The Times* supported the Prime Minister. It supported her yesterday, but was not quite so sure this morning—there was some doubt about who Mr. Murdoch will have to do business with in future, and therefore a little hedging of the bets, as deals were still on the table. *The Times* on Tuesday described the poll tax as

"the single most stupid act of the present Government".

It went on to say of the right hon. Member for Henley:

"His weakness—and it is a core weakness—is that he has shown neither intellectual rigour nor political courage in showing his colleagues a way out."

The leader article continued:

"To its credit, the Labour party has done so".

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hattersley: No, I shall not give way again. I have six minutes left and I propose to take every one.

At least we know that the right hon. Member for Henley is sort of thinking about the poll tax.

Mrs. Ewing: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hattersley: He has written some half-thought-out ideas on the back of an envelope. We know that he is thinking of a possible review——

Mrs. Ewing: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Lady knows that, if the right hon. Gentleman does not give way, she must resume her seat.

Mr. Hattersley: We recorded and noted that the right hon. Member for Henley promised a review and a re-examination. He then promised to switch some local government expenditure to national Government, without thinking about whether it would increase the tax bill.

[Mr. Hattersley]

When I shadowed him at the Department of the Environment, his obsession was with switching national expenditure to local government. In the past month or two, he has changed his mind.

At least the right hon. Gentleman has given us half-thought-out ideas on where he stands on the crucial domestic political issue. I hope that, in the next four or five days, we shall hear where the other contenders for high office stand on the issue. What does the Foreign Secretary think about the poll tax? If he were here, I would offer to give way to him so that he could reveal to an anxious nation how he would alter it.

Mrs. Ewing: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way to me then?

Mr. Hattersley: No. The hon. Lady is not Foreign Secretary and nor is she likely to be, so I shall not give way.

Mrs. Ewing *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I ask the hon. Lady to sit down.

Mr. Hattersley: I chose the poll tax as one of my examples because it epitomises all that is wrong with the Government. It takes from the poor and gives to the rich. It divides the nation. Its collection costs make it inefficient as well as callous. It has come to symbolise all that was worst in the past 11 years, and it will go on to typify all that is bad in the dying months of the Government.

The same pattern appears time after time. In education, funds are diverted to and concentrated on the city technology colleges, the contracted-out schools and the independent schools, while the generality of education, on which most families rely, is neglected. The same applies to the health service. Tax concessions are given to elderly people who want to take up private medicine but in the general health service, on which most families rely, wards and hospitals are closed.

The same applies to policies affecting black and Asian Britons. We hear great protestations about the need to support the family and endorse family virtues, as long as those families are not black or Asian families who are divided and kept permanently apart.

The philosophy of the past 11 years has divided the country. It has been the philosophy of the weakest to the wall, the devil take the hindmost and every man for himself. The country has grown tired of that philosophy and contemptuous of the people who advocate it. That is why whoever leads the Tory party at the next election will lead it to defeat. What the nation wants now is not conflict but co-operation. What the British people want now is not confrontation but concessions. They want a kinder, gentler and more understanding Government. They want the nation to work together. That is one thing that the Prime Minister has never been able to propose because she is incapable of understanding it.

My final word is this. At the beginning of the policy document which the Labour party put to the nation six months ago, we talked about an Administration who crushed dissent, were intolerant of criticism, bribed newspapers and bullied broadcasters and by every criterion were exactly the elective dictatorship against which Lord Hailsham warned us before he became the right hon. Lady's Lord Chancellor and a member of such an elective dictatorship. Belatedly, a few members of the Cabinet have realised the parliamentary tyranny for which the right hon. Lady was responsible. They have overturned her for that reason, and we shall overturn them for supporting her for so long.

9.29 pm

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John MacGregor): We reject this motion outright, not just because everyone on this side of the House has confidence in the policies which have produced the very many successes for this country of the past decade—and will go on doing so—but because we wish to underline, as did my right hon. and hon. Friends who have spoken today, and to record our gratitude to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister for her immense achievements during her outstanding 11 years of leadership.

During those 11 years, our economy has been transformed from being what was widely known as the sick man of Europe to one of substantial growth, prosperity, investment and underlying economic strength. It has been my right hon. Friend's unwavering consistency of approach and belief which has taken us away from the dark days of the late 1970s and away, too, from the constant emphasis on state intervention, subsidy and control, and has restored a spirit of intitiative, self-reliance and enterprise in this country.

As everyone recognises, my right hon. Friend has made a remarkable and powerfully positive contribution internationally, from the development of the European Community to the ending of the cold war and the rebirth of freedom and democracy in eastern Europe and elsewhere, and in many other ways. My right hon. Friend's world status and reputation are immediately obvious to anyone who travels beyond our shores. As we as colleagues have so often seen, in tackling all the many difficult issues which confront a Prime Minister on a day-to-day and even an hour-to-hour basis, my right hon. Friend has always shown courage, generosity, clear-sightedness and a great capacity to grasp and make decisions on the most complex issues, but above and through it all a clear vision of the way ahead for this country and its people, and of the values and principles that she most sought to advance.

Mr. Winnick: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. MacGregor: I ask the hon. Gentleman to let me finish this passage, please.

This morning my noble and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor said of the Prime Minister:

"Your place in our country's history is already assured."

There can be no doubt about that. Her place will be that of one of the great Prime Ministers. I should like to add that not only has she been a great Prime Minister but, as the House has seen again this afternoon, she is a great lady.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. MacGregor: In a minute.

Mr. Healey: We are all impressed by the glowing encomium that the right hon. Gentleman is offering to the Prime Minister. If she really is such a paragon of political moral and national virtue, why the hell has he ditched her?

Mr. MacGregor: I want to come back later—*[Laughter.]* because—*[Laughter.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Mr. John MacGregor.

Mr. MacGregor: I am coming to the right hon. Gentleman's point. I was only going to say that I wanted to return to the point that he made in his speech this afternoon, and I shall do so. We have invented for ourselves a complex electoral system which requires re-examination, at least for when we are in government. I do not wish to elaborate on that point now, but we must ask ourselves whether we are not setting the leader of our party a test in mid-term which is more severe than any Prime Minister should be subjected to. We need to address that point.

I know that the Prime Minister likes us to get down to business, so I will get down to the debate. However, I know that all Conservative Members—and, I suspect, many other Members—would want me to pay that tribute to my right hon. Friend and would support it wholeheartedly.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Bradford, North (Mr. Rooney) on making his maiden speech so soon. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) said, it is always a daunting experience, but the hon. Gentleman overcame it calmly. His speech was a little contentious and he will therefore understand why I cannot agree with much of it. He will also understand why I take issue with him on the city technology college, which I am sure will be an important contribution to raising educational standards in Bradford's inner-city area and will also prove extremely popular with parents.

I shall make just three comments on the opening speech of the Leader of the Opposition. He criticised the Government for not building and strengthening our economy—at a time when employment is at an all-time high, private sector investment has increased by 45 per cent. in the three years to 1989, capital investment is running at £30 billion this year and increasing next year and private sector investment on training amounts to more than £20 billion. The facts simply belie his criticism, but the right hon. Gentleman has never been interested in facts.

The right hon. Gentleman talked about the so-called fundamental conflicts in our party about Britain's position in Europe, but the real conflict is in his own party, where there is even a conflict as to whether Britain should be a member of the Community. The right hon. Gentleman had the gall to argue that we do not have the policies to enable us to receive benefit from the Community. I remind him that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister renegotiated the repayment of nearly £10 billion to this country to put right the results of the deals that the Labour Government had done. That repayment is an obvious example of benefit to this country.

The two most entertaining and listened-to Opposition speeches today were made by right hon. Gentlemen who, if they will forgive my saying so, are both over the age of 70. That speaks volumes for the future of the Labour party.

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): How old is the right hon. Gentleman?

Mr. MacGregor: A good deal younger.

As a number of my right hon. and hon. Friends have already said, the conventional forces in Europe treaty signed on Monday and the CSCE final document signed by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister yesterday are eloquent witness to the success of the Government's conduct of foreign affairs. The prospects for peace and for human rights in Europe are now better than at any time for generations. For the first time, through the CFE treaty, there will be a balance of forces in Europe, and massive numbers of Soviet tanks, planes and artillery will be scrapped. The countries of NATO have joined with the Soviet Union and eastern Europe to make it clear that we no longer regard each other as adversaries.

Anyone who reads the full text of the charter for a new Europe will find that it is not only an eloquent summary of the principles of a free and democratic society, but a notable acceptance of the benefits of free market economies and an outright rejection of socialist ones. That is a triumph, for this country and for our children, and the Government are proud to have played our part, under the courageous and clear-sighted leadership of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister.

Ms. Hilary Armstrong (Durham, North-West): If foreign affairs are so important, why is not the Foreign Secretary or neither of the two other people seeking to lead the Government present in the Chamber to defend that Government?

Mr. MacGregor: I assure the hon. Lady that we shall all be defending the Government in the Lobby later. It is interesting to note how the triumph came about, first, because in the 1980s we and others in the west maintained strong defences and the nuclear deterrent. The Soviet Union realised that military domination was impossible. Secondly, the spectacular success of free enterprise economies in the west acted as a beacon for the oppressed peoples of eastern Europe, and persuaded the Soviet Union that it could not compete economically, still less dominate, on the basis of centralised, totalitarian planning. Thirdly, as my right hon. Friend has made clear many times, that triumph was attained because of the courage and vision of President Gorbachev. Against the odds, the Soviet Union produced a leader to meet the moment. The country will remember, however, as do our friends and allies throughout the world, that it was our Government and our Prime Minister who first recognised that, in my right hon. Friend's memorable words, President Gorbachev was a man "with whom we can do business".

Fourthly, because of the united support of Governments and people in the west, in accordance with the Helsinki agreements, it was a triumph for all those in the Soviet Union and eastern European countries who stood up for basic human rights and freedoms long before it was safe, let alone acceptable, to do so.

We are today defending the record of the Government. We have stood consistently for strong defence, for the cause of freedom and for individual liberty. There is not a shred of justification for censure of the Government's record on defence and international affairs. The Labour party has welcomed the successful outcome of the CSCE summit. Even Opposition Members realised that they could do no other, but let us examine their record——

Ms. Short *rose*——

Mr. MacGregor: Let us examine the record of Labour Members on the policies that helped to make that possible. First, they consistently opposed our staunch and resolute stand on nuclear weapons. They were wrong. The response

[Mr. MacGregor]

of the Leader of the Opposition to the question from my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, East (Mr. Sayeed) about the right hon. Gentleman's membership of CND had the merit of being short, but it showed how wrong he has been throughout on that matter.

Sir Jim Spicer: Might it be possible at some point to place on record the names of those who spoke at the CND rally in Trafalgar square in October 1983, calling for no deployment of Polaris weapons and saying that if Polaris came it would be the end of peace?

Mr. MacGregor: My hon. Friend is right. It is worth recalling that it was, in part, our determination to have cruise and Pershing missiles which enabled us to get to the point of the treaty this week.

Ms. Short *rose*——

Mr. MacGregor: I will not give way again. The hon. Member for Sparkbrook gave way about as many times as I have.

In their hearts, Opposition Members dislike, distrust and sometimes despise the free enterprise economy for which my hon. Friends and I stand. In that, too, they have been wrong. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) is indicating that he cannot hear what the Minister is saying. That is largely because there is so much chatter going on. I appeal to the House to listen in silence.

Mr. MacGregor: Consider the criticisms of Opposition Members of our privatisation policies in that respect. The leaders of the emerging free market economies in eastern Europe think differently. Above all, privatisation is seen throughout the world as the symbol of the successful economic policy that the British Government have pursued. If imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, we know the judgment of the rest of the world on our record.

Next—I believe this to be the most important point in that context—in the words of the Opposition defence spokesman, the Opposition condemned my right hon. Friend's proposals for a continuing NATO out-of-area role as "post-imperialist fantasy". That was just six weeks before Saddam Hussein invaded the Gulf. They were wrong again—blindly and dangerously wrong.

Ms. Short *rose*——

Mr. MacGregor: No, I will not give way again.

Ms. Short *rose*——

Mr. MacGregor: I give way for the last time.

Ms. Short: We understand that the Prime Minister's strengths are also her weaknesses. Her arrogance and strength are part and parcel of her problem. In this period of history, when we are talking about the Soviet Union and eastern Europe, it is tasteless for the Prime Minister to claim this historic change or for the right hon. Gentleman to claim it for her. Stalin created an indefensible system which had to crumble. It is not her work but history working through Europe and Mr. Gorbachev. It is no creation of the Prime Minister.

Mr. MacGregor: The hon. Lady is a bad reader o history. She should understand that it was because of th strength of our defences that we reached the position o dialogue. It was because of the discussions with Presiden Gorbachev that my right hon. Friend and many other were able to establish a dialogue, which saw the change taking place in the Soviet Union and elsewhere. Th insistence that we placed on human rights and freedoms and on the principles and benefits of a free economy, le to the charter for a new Europe being signed this week History will show that it is the policies that we hav pursued consistently as a Government which have brough about this week's notable achievement.

Much has been said about social policies. I should lik to say a word about that issue now because there has no yet been an opportunity to respond to those points. Th first and most important point is that the economic succes and, yes, the economic growth which the Government' policies have made possible have provided a sound basi for the social policies that we have pursued. The right hon Member for Sparkbrook talked about economic growt and economic growth leagues. As he knows, he wa selective in choosing one year and comparing it with jus one other——

Mr. Hattersley: On the contrary, I took the period tha the Prime Minister took and simply corrected her figure

Mr. MacGregor: The right hon. Gentleman took tw years, but we should take a period as a whole. Taking five-year period, in real terms the economic growth unde the last Labour Government was about 10 per cent whereas in the past five years of this Governmen economic growth has been running at over 20 per cen That is a clear illustration that economic growth is muc better now than in the second half of the 1970s. Th economic success has made possible the social policies th we have pursued. I ask the House to look at the emphas that we have consistently placed when determining ou priorities for public spending on protecting the mo vulnerable groups in our society.

Next year, £32 billion will be spent on the nation health service—50 per cent. more in real terms than th Labour Government spent in their last year in office. L us also consider our policies on social security, which is th front line in protecting those least able to care f themselves without help. Again, the ability to he effectively comes only from a strong economy. From ne year, we shall be spending £63 billion per year on soci security—41 per cent. more in real terms than whe Labour left office. Those are big numbers, and the represent an even bigger achievement. Furthermor support for people in residential care and nursing hom has trebled per head in real terms since 1979, from £ million in 1979 to £1·1 billion in 1989-90.

We have also protected pensioners, not only b increasing the old age pension, but by extending freedo of choice to pensioners. Personal pensions give peop power to save for retirement in whichever way suits the best. More than 4 million people have taken out person pensions in the past two years. Our economic policies ha enabled pensioners' incomes from savings to more tha double. Under Labour, the value of their savings fell.

One of the most important points to note is th spending on benefits for long-term sick and disabl people has doubled in real terms since 1979. We a

introducing new benefits and making improvements in existing benefits specifically to help disabled people further. Yesterday the House gave a Second Reading to the Disability Living Allowance and Disability Working Allowance Bill. Those new allowances will help to provide help for more than 300,000 people at a cost of £325 million by 1993-94.

Our record on social policies and on caring is second to none. It has been achieved by successful economic policies. That is why, on every front, it is right to say that we should be regarded more favourably than the Labour party when it was in power.

Mr. Spearing *rose*——

Mr. MacGregor: No, I have said that I shall not give way again.

The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook also referred to Europe. No one who looks at the facts can be in any doubt that the Conservative party is the party that is united on Europe—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. MacGregor: I have no doubt about that whatsoever. The vast majority of Conservative Members have always been wholeheartedly committed to our full participation in the European Community. We have long recognised, as my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said in her Guildhall speech, that our destiny lies in Europe. The Labour party continues to duck a straight question: how many Opposition Members would unite behind the new pro-European facade erected by the Leader of the Opposition?

Let us examine the record. The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook fairly said that he has always been strongly in favour of Britain's membership of the Community—as I have been from my earliest days in politics. I grant the right hon. Gentleman that, but he knows the difficulties that he has always faced in the Labour party. The Labour party has changed its mind no fewer than six times in the past 30 years—six times in the political lifetime of the right hon. Gentleman. The Labour party supported membership of the Community in 1962 and opposed it in 1964. It was for membership again in 1966, and against it in 1971, for membership in 1975, and against it in 1983. Now, to judge from the facade, it is for membership again in 1990. With that track record the Labour party is likely to be against Europe in time for 1992, for it in 1994, against it in 1999 and for it again in 2003 when the Labour party will celebrate 20 years in opposition.

In debates on the European Community the Opposition have never wanted to go into detail about their policies because there are grave divisions not only of principle but also of detail within the party.

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton): My right hon. Friend and I have challenged the Leader of the Opposition several times over the speech that he made three years ago when he said that the single market would be an abdication of responsibility and an apology for action. We have not yet received an answer. Will my right hon. Friend challenge him again?

Mr. MacGregor: I made exactly the same point in my speech on the Queen's Speech, but we have still not had an answer from the right hon. Gentleman. That is because he does not understand that it has been this Government and this party who have led the way in the European Community on the single market and his party which has opposed what we have been doing, just as his party supports the social charter which will do so much harm to jobs and our economic strength while it is we who have drawn attention to its deficiencies.

The Labour party has made it clear that it believes in the European monetary system, although it says:

> "We believe that the European Monetary System, as at present constituted, suffers from too great an emphasis on deflationary measures as a means of achieving monetary targets and that it imposes obligations which are not symmetrical."

So much for the Opposition's claim to support sensible fiscal and monetary policies. They would support entry to the ERM on the very basis which would destroy the benefits that we shall gain from it.

In a previous no-confidence debate, the speech by the proposer of the motion contained the following passage:

> "The Government have doubled prices, doubled dole queues, doubled debt, diminished our defences and undermined public respect and confidence in the law. There has been a failure not only of policies but of the whole philosophy on which they are based—the philosophy which elevates the State, dwarfs the individual and enlarges the bureaucracy. Across the Western world the tide is turning against that, and soon the same thing will happen here."—[*Official Report*, 28 March 1979; Vol. 965, c. 740.]

The speaker was my right hon. Friend the Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher). It was that speech which led to the end of those policies and that catalogue of disasters. There will be a wholly different outcome to tonight's debate, for we are determined never to see those Labour policies foisted on our nation again.

It is this Government who have secured sustained economic growth in the 1980s greater in sum than that of nearly all other major European countries. It is this Government who have enabled net income for the average family to rise by two-thirds after inflation, compared with a real fall of nearly a fifth in the five years before we took office. It is this Government who have revived private enterprise and respect for success and profits, through privatisation and our fiscal, economic and industrial policies—in contrast to the emphasis on interference, re-nationalisation and new state controls peddled by the Labour party.

It is this Government who have restored international confidence in our economy, so that emergency recourse to the International Monetary Fund is now only a sad and unlamented memory. The right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) did not have a distinguished career as Chancellor or as a Treasury Minister. By making an entertaining speech today he managed to indulge in a shameless piece of bluff about that episode in response to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, East. The right hon. Gentleman compared the £2·5 billion that he had to borrow from the International Monetary Fund with the £19 billion that he said we borrowed on capital markets about a year ago. He forgot to mention that the PSBR had to be financed at that time, thus causing him to go for additional borrowing from the IMF. That borrowing caused the collapse and the savage reductions in expenditure to enable him to repay the IMF money and caused great damage to our economy.

Mr. Healey: The House will recall that the right hon. Gentleman said that before he finished his winding-up speech he would tell us why he and his colleagues have ditched the Prime Minister. He has only five minutes to go.

[Mr. Healey]

Before he is completely drowned in the entrails of his word processor, perhaps he will deal with the question that he promised to answer.

Mr. MacGregor: I told the right hon. Gentleman that I would respond to a point that he made. I shall continue with the interesting issue of the state into which the right hon. Gentleman got our economy. Taking account of the growth in GDP, the public sector borrowing requirement in that year was equivalent as a proportion of GDP to about £50 billion today. The Government have pursued good financial and spending policies, thus enabling national debt to be repaid rather than being massively increased as it was during the right hon. Gentleman's time in office.

Through the creation of extra wealth, the Government have enabled spending on the priority areas to increase substantially after inflation. Spending on health has increased by nearly 50 per cent. and on schools by more than 40 per cent. per pupil. We have doubled spending on the disabled and on law and order, including the police and dealing with crime, and it is this Government who have seen the total income of pensioners increase by 31 per cent. in real terms since 1979. We have spread ownership on a substantially wider scale than ever before. More than 1·5 million council tenants have been enabled to buy their own homes, increasing home ownership——

Mr. Bell: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. In the interests of the Chair, the House and the Prime Minister, the Prime Minister is entitled to know why she has been dismissed.

Mr. Speaker: That is not a point of order.

Mr. MacGregor: I am making it clear why it is right to reject the motion. The Government have increased home ownership by a quarter, so that over two thirds of homes in Great Britain are now owner-occupied. We have more than trebled the number of shareholders since 1979 and have revolutionised the extent to which so many of our citizens now have substantial personal or occupational pensions.

The Government have seen the creation of 400,000 new businesses and many more people in self-employment. We have done all of that in the face, usually, of outright hostility from the Opposition. We have extended personal choice and have given power back to the people in the choice and variety of schools, medical treatment and income tax, so that people can choose to spend what they have earned rather than have the state spend it for them. All of that is in contrast with the Labour party's usually total opposition to such measures or, in some cases, half-baked skin-deep conversion to them. We have created the conditions for employment to be at an all-time high—3·75 million new jobs since 1983—and we have one of the lowest unemployment rates in the European Community. We have introduced the toughest controls on industrial pollution anywhere in Europe, and have put in place the biggest ever investment programme in water quality. We are keeping our defences strong, and that has helped to bring about the collapse of communism.—[HON. MEMBERS: "Why has she gone?"] It is this Government who have so changed the map of political ideas and attitudes in this country that the Labour party has had to abandon practically all of its previous baggage—[HON. MEMBERS: "Why?"] This is a party united on all these issues and policies, as the Opposition are not—[HON. MEMBERS: "Why?"]

Mr. Derek Foster (Bishop Auckland) *rose in his p and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question, That the Question be now put, *put and a to.*

Question put accordingly:—

The House divided: Ayes 247, Noes 367.

Division No. 9] [

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane	Dobson, Frank
Allen, Graham	Doran, Frank
Anderson, Donald	Douglas, Dick
Archer, Rt Hon Peter	Duffy, A. E. P.
Armstrong, Hilary	Dunnachie, Jimmy
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy	Eadie, Alexander
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack	Eastham, Ken
Ashton, Joe	Evans, John *(St Helens N*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*	Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*	Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Mo*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*	Fatchett, Derek
Barron, Kevin	Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Battle, John	Fisher, Mark
Beckett, Margaret	Flannery, Martin
Beith, A. J.	Flynn, Paul
Bell, Stuart	Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Bellotti, David	Foster, Derek
Benn, Rt Hon Tony	Foulkes, George
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*	Fraser, John
Benton, Joseph	Fyfe, Maria
Bermingham, Gerald	Galbraith, Sam
Bidwell, Sydney	Galloway, George
Blair, Tony	Garrett, John *(Norwich S*
Blunkett, David	Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
Boateng, Paul	George, Bruce
Boyes, Roland	Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Bradley, Keith	Godman, Dr Norman A.
Bray, Dr Jeremy	Gordon, Mildred
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*	Gould, Bryan
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*	Graham, Thomas
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*	Grant, Bernie *(Tottenhan*
Buckley, George J.	Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Caborn, Richard	Grocott, Bruce
Callaghan, Jim	Hardy, Peter
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*	Harman, Ms Harriet
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*	Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Campbell-Savours, D. N.	Heal, Mrs Sylvia
Canavan, Dennis	Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*	Henderson, Doug
Cartwright, John	Hinchliffe, David
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*	Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*	Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kils*
Clay, Bob	Home Robertson, John
Clelland, David	Hood, Jimmy
Clwyd, Mrs Ann	Howarth, George *(Know*
Cohen, Harry	Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'hea*
Coleman, Donald	Howells, Geraint
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*	Howells, Dr. Kim *(Ponty*
Corbett, Robin	Hoyle, Doug
Corbyn, Jeremy	Hughes, John *(Coventry*
Cousins, Jim	Hughes, Robert *(Aberde*
Cox, Tom	Hughes, Roy *(Newport E*
Crowther, Stan	Hughes, Simon *(Southw*
Cryer, Bob	Hume, John
Cummings, John	Ilsley, Eric
Cunliffe, Lawrence	Ingram, Adam
Cunningham, Dr John	Janner, Greville
Dalyell, Tam	Johnston, Sir Russell
Darling, Alistair	Jones, Barry *(Alyn & De*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*	Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*	Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*	Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Dewar, Donald	Kennedy, Charles
Dixon, Don	Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil

Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McGrady, Eddie
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Mallon, Seamus
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Hara, Edward
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Paisley, Rev Ian
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terence
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Sillars, Jim
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mrs. Llin Golding.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambaS*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwy
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epson*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heath, Rt Hon Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv'*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'w*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dfo*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourn*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Sir Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elain
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwat*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman

Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Sir Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Sir Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patri
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcol
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(*
Townsend, Cyril
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, Davi
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Ge
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt
Wakeham, Rt Ho
Waldegrave, Rt
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'si*
Walker, Rt Hon
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Den
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir Joh
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, A
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs
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Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
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Younger, Rt Hon

Tellers for the N
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Question accordingly negatived.

Matthew Brown Brewery, Blackburn

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Nicholas Baker.]*

10.18 pm

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): I am most grateful to Mr. Speaker for deciding to select for debate this important issue—the implications for competition policy of the closure of Matthew Brown Brewery, Blackburn, by Scottish and Newcastle Breweries. The House will know that it is most unusual for members of the shadow Cabinet to seek an Adjournment debate, even on a matter of grave constituency importance. When I discussed the matter with Mr. Speaker about 10 days ago, he said that he thought that he could fit it in the following Thursday because 22 November looked like a very quiet day. We can all be wrong. None the less, I am most grateful for the opportunity.

On Friday 9 November Scottish and Newcastle, the owner of Matthew Brown, announced without notice the complete closure of the Matthew Brown brewery in Blackburn from early next year with a loss of a minimum of 150 jobs. The closure decision was in flagrant breach of categorical undertakings to keep open the Blackburn brewery given by Scottish and Newcastle to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission in 1985 and repeated on many subsequent occasions in 1987, 1988 and 1989.

The question raised by Scottish and Newcastle's conduct is identical to that which arose in the takeover of Distillers by Guinness—whether undertakings freely given by directors of companies in pursuit of a takeover of another company should be enforceable, or whether the Government are to stand idly by and allow company directors recklessly to make undertakings about the future conduct of a business and then breach them with impunity.

I shall briefly state the facts. The Matthew Brown brewery was established in 1875, and moved to its present site of the Lion brewery in the Little Harwood area of Blackburn in 1927. I first got to know the company in the mid-1970s. From then until the final takeover by Scottish and Newcastle in 1987 Matthew Brown was a prosperous and profitable regional brewery highly regarded by many City analysts, as my files make clear.

In 1985, Scottish and Newcastle launched a bid for Matthew Brown, valuing the company at about £100 million. The bid was strongly contested by the company, by consumers, by trade unions and by the whole east Lancashire area. It was seen as an attempt by Scottish and Newcastle not to extend consumer choice but to cut out part of its competition.

From the beginning, there was the gravest suspicion about Scottish and Newcastle's integrity and intentions, and the belief, confirmed by events, that it wanted Matthew Brown's pubs but not its brewery.

The 1985 bid was referred to the MMC, to which I gave written and oral evidence. It reported in November 1985 in Cmnd. 9645. The commission concluded that the bid was not against the public interest, but it did so in negative terms, saying:

"We discern no material advantages to the public interest arising from the proposed merger; but the question before us is whether the merger may be expected to operate against the public interest, and in our view there are not sufficient grounds for such an expectation."

It was a finely balanced judgment and, as was ma clear in paragraph 7.25, one critical matter that was tak into account was an undertaking by Scottish a Newcastle about the future of the Blackburn and, as happens, the Masham breweries.

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): Does my hon. Frie accept that one of the concerns in the wider Lancash area is that, in view of what has gone before, not only w we see the tragic loss of jobs in the brewery to which referred but that the administrative and office jobs whi the brewery at the moment says will remain will also lost? Previous experience has led to great suspicion abo what will happen.

Mr. Straw: I agree entirely. There are two reasons f our expecting that those jobs will be moved. First, c cannot trust anything that the senior directors of Scotti and Newcastle now say. I am sorry to have to make th statement, but I am afraid that that is the reality. Second it made sense to have the administrative headquarters Scottish and Newcastle at Matthew Brown only while was a going concern, and every other aspect of the brew operation has been run down.

The MMC's report includes an undertaking fro Scottish and Newcastle which says:

"We"—

that is, Scottish and Newcastle—

"have stated categorically, publicly, and in writing th without any question whatsoever the Blackburn and Masha breweries are sacrosanct for continued brewing purposes. There could not be a more clear, categorical, copp bottomed, 24-carat gold undertaking for all time about t future of the Blackburn brewery.

Mr. Chris Butler (Warrington, South): The ho Gentleman may know that we are facing the closure Greenall in my constituency, with the loss of some 5 jobs. Its capacity will be transferred to a major brew —Allied. Does he believe that the brewing industry may a developing structure with less competition and diversi which is completely at odds with what the Monopolies a Mergers Commission would want? Will he call for t Office of Fair Trading to investigate this developing lack competitiveness?

Mr. Straw: I entirely accept what the hon. Gentlem says. I am glad to acknowledge that the hon. Member f Hyndburn (Mr. Hargreaves), who is sitting next to t hon. Gentleman, is, like me, concerned about t employment prospects of some of his constituents w work for the brewery. I accept what the hon. Member f Warrington, South says, but although the arrangements the Monopolies and Mergers Commission may be a reas for closing Greenall Witney, they certainly are justification for the closure of Matthew Brown, as I ho to make clear in a moment.

The 1985 bid was cleared by the Monopolies a Mergers Commission, albeit reluctantly. Not only d Scottish and Newcastle give an undertaking to t Monopolies and Mergers Commission, but Alick Rank the then chief executive of Scottish and Newcastle, wr to me on 20 March 1985, in anticipation of the repo saying:

"I believe therefore that our proposals will bring growi benefits both to Matthew Brown and to Blackburn."

Scottish and Newcastle gave another mater undertaking not to acquire another brewery. Paragra

[Mr. Straw]

531 of the report states that when Scottish and Newcastle was asked whether it would seek to acquire further brewery companies, it said that

"it had no further plans for any takeover of breweries at the present time. If it achieved what it set out to achieve in acquiring Matthew Brown, it would conclude that development of other parts of its business was its prime priority."

The first breach of the undertakings occurred in September 1986 when, contrary to that promise not to acquire another brewery—one should bear in mind the fact that once it had clearance from the Monopolies and Mergers Commission it continued to seek to purchase Matthew Brown—it purchased the Home Brewery, Nottingham. That is a material fact in this saga of disreputable conduct by Scottish and Newcastle, because part of the capacity that is being closed at Matthew Brown in Blackburn is being transferred to Home Brewery, Nottingham, which was purchased contrary to its undertaking.

Although it was cleared in 1985, the original bid failed marginally. In 1987, Scottish and Newcastle upped its bid to £186 million. By then, I and others had better informed ourselves of its true intentions. It had made some poor management decisions which had led to overcapacity in its Manchester brewery, its Chorley distribution centre and the additional capacity at Home Brewery, Nottingham. As it was paying almost twice as much as it had offered two years before, it could make a return on that amount of capital only if it closed Matthew Brown's brewery and distribution and substituted its products for Matthew Brown products.

I put those points to Mr. Gavin Reed, who is now Scottish and Newcastle's group managing director, at a meeting on 18 October 1987, but he categorically denied them. I was not convinced, but he said that Blackburn would be the main producing part of the group for Matthew Brown beers and its main north-west head-quarters. He said, and I have this in my contemporaneous note:

"I don't believe the risk to employment exists at all."

When asked how Scottish and Newcastle would get its money back, he said that it would expand take-home trade, that the Manchester brewery mainly brewed lager, that it would not close the Blackburn lager brewery and that it would keep Blackburn as a distribution centre.

The undertakings given in 1985 were repeated in the offer document that was issued in 1987. It said:

"The Blackburn and Masham breweries are important to the success of Matthew Brown's business and have an assured future under S and N's long-term plans for the combined business."

In 1988, Elders IXL tried to take over Scottish and Newcastle. The boot was on the other foot, and Scottish and Newcastle came to see east Lancashire Members of Parliament, including my hon. Friend the Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) and the hon. Member for Hyndburn (Mr. Hargreaves).

Mr. Ken Hargreaves (Hyndburn): I am sad that, when Scottish and Newcastle were being taken over, we were consulted and used. On this occasion, the decision was taken before we were told.

Mr. Straw: The hon. Gentleman is right to use the word, "used". We have been used. Scottish and Newcastle has taken us for a ride and acted in underhand way. When it came to see against the bid from Elders IXL, it said "categorical and repeated undertaki continuation of the brewery business repeated those pledges again in 1989—le —after the Monopolies and Mergers C on the future supply of beer and gave a implement it. The company said that continue in Blackburn. Now, some n brewery is to go.

As the hon. Member for Hyndburn announcement was made in a most b letters that were sent out the work for thanked for their efforts. Instead the co blame them for alleged inefficiencies.

All hon. Members understand that an given quite honourably and reasonably acquisitions and takeovers as to the futu company, but that there can be unanticipated, change in market conditio impossible to fulfill those undertakings. do not believe that Scottish and Newc plead that that is the case.

Let me explain why. First, there is the —it has been present all the way throu —that Scottish and Newcastle could not the capital that it had invested in pur Brown unless it shut the brewery production to its other breweries Nottingham and Newcastle. Secondly, by Scottish and Newcastle for closure is a fabrication. Thirdly, there is clear ev 1988 Scottish and Newcastle had follo deliberate, strategy to engineer a marketing, sales and production of brewery and products so as to justify c

I have already dealt with the first financial imperatives on Scottish and Ne second, the principal excuse used Newcastle, when it issued its closu November, was that the Monopoli Commission report on the supply of be sell 300 of its 2,300 public houses, and th changed market conditions. That excuse Scottish and Newcastle's trade is free; it profitable public houses; and it has done number of those 300 public houses und continue to supply them under the Scottish and Newcastle is now saying is what Mr. Alick Rankin, chairman of the 2 July in his annual report—that the Mergers Commission report was "an Scottish and Newcastle, not a disaster.

"I anticipate that the Company will trading benefits from this current preferred the further loosening of the tie in 1992."

My third allegation is that Scottis engineered a rundown, contrary to speci the offer document to support and Brown's sales of lager and to develop sal How has it done that? It stopped adver on television. If one is going to sell la advertise it on television. Matthe advertising, but Scottish and Newcastle it increased the advertising of McE

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instructed its representatives to push Scottish and Newcastle products, rather than Matthew Brown products. It downgraded Matthew Brown pumps and bar advertising in some outlets, and took their products out of other outlets. It offered publicans better prices on McEwan's lager than on Matthew Brown products. Having done that, and therefore deliberately secured a slump in Matthew Brown demand to only 32 per cent. of capacity and only four or five brews a week—four years ago it was running at between 18 and 22 brews a week—it said that the brewery was working inefficiently, and that closure was justified. Of course, if one runs down a fixed asset and operates it at only 30 per cent. of capacity, it is bound to work inefficiently. That does not mean that it was not working efficiently before. Distribution, wines and spirits, cellars and estates have been moved to Chorley and brewing is to be moved to Manchester, Newcastle and Nottingham.

I put all those allegations to Scottish and Newcastle in a detailed letter on Tuesday. I sent it to each and every one of the directors. Scottish and Newcastle replied earlier today with a couple of pages of waffle giving the excuse that much of the information was commercial in confidence, which it is not. It attached press notices which I have already seen and do not answer the point. So I am not making allegations that I have not put to Scottish and Newcastle. The fact that it cannot answer them shows its understanding of its guilt in the matter.

The conclusion from this disreputable story seems to be inescapable. Scottish and Newcastle directors, including Mr. Alick Rankin, Mr. Gavin Reed and others, entered into undertakings which from the beginning they never intended to keep. They acted dishonestly. They gave undertakings to the MMC, shareholders and the work force. They offered those undertakings freely in free, contested takeovers and to the MMC. In my judgment, undertakings freely offered in such circumstances must be capable of enforcement. What enforcement can there be? One cannot put the clock back, of course, but where such undertakings are made to the MMC—"sacrosanct and for ever" were the words—and are broken in such circumstances, it should be possible for the company to have the matter referred back to the MMC. I ask the Minister to consider that. Alternatively, the matter could be referred to the Office of Fair Trading. There should be a power to require disinvestment of the assets to someone else who will keep the brewery going.

The takeover of Matthew Brown by Scottish and Newcastle was pursued in the name of extending consumer choice. It has resulted in cuts in consumer choice, cuts in jobs and the shutdown of a brewery which otherwise had a good future. It is a disgraceful story. The shutdown was wholly unnecessary. The people who have been adversely affected by the closure want justice.

10.36 pm

The Minister for Corporate Affairs (Mr. John Redwood): I understand the worries that the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) has expressed about the brewing industry and those of my hon. Friends the Members for Warrington, South (Mr. Butler) and for Hyndburn (Mr. Hargreaves), who are also present for this important debate. Like the hon. Member for Blackburn, I should be sorry to see those jobs threatened at the Lion brewery.

Mr. Doug Hoyle (Warrington, North): And in B

Mr. Redwood: Yes, indeed. I understand the that the closure could have on the families conce should like to see a thriving brewing industry secure employment. So I shall add to the hon. Gentl account of the sequence of bids and events and co on whether undertakings can mean something an action it is possible to take on them.

Scottish and Newcastle Breweries' first bid for M Brown was referred to the MMC in 1985. The concluded that it would not operate against the interest. This meant that the then Secretary of Stat take no action to block the bid, or impose conditi Scottish and Newcastle, as he cannot in such overturn the MMC's finding, if he wanted to. Even Scottish and Newcastle told the MMC that the fu Matthew Brown's breweries at Blackburn and M was sacrosanct, the MMC did not conclude that if it occurred, would be against the public interest was therefore no basis in that case for holdi company to its promise.

Tonight we are considering the closure of one two breweries. The third, ultimately successful bid referred to the MMC. I have little doubt that, in that decision, my right hon. and noble Friend Young, who was then Secretary of State, would ha influenced by the MMC's earlier report and similarity between the two bids. On that occasion were no powers to attach conditions to a decision refer a bid to the MMC.

I listened carefully to the hon. Gentleman's reco dations about how the treatment of undertakings c tightened up. I am sure that he will be pleased to kn matters have been tightened up considerably sinc days. Under the Companies Act 1989, provision i for undertakings to be given in place of a reference MMC. Certain types of promise made by a compa condition for the merger being allowed to proceed a enforceable. It is now an offence to give false or mis information about a merger to the Secretary of St Director General of Fair Trading, or the MMC. Of in each case it would have to be demonstrated t information was known to be misleading, or that false and given recklessly at the point where it given.

There is another way of looking at the matte conduct of takeover bids is regulated by the City c takeovers and mergers, which is administered takeover panel. The bidding company must st intentions for the future of the business and its emp The code requires that all statements made i documents meet the same high standards of accu prospectuses.

It is the job of the takeover panel to ensure th standards are maintained. If it has reason to belie an offeror company has made statements in bad f can investigate and take whatever steps it fe necessary. I will ensure that the panel receives a copy transcript of the hon. Gentleman's remarks.

Mr. Straw: I am grateful to the Minister for sayi he will draw my remarks to the attention of the ta panel. What might follow from that, if the panel b that this raises a serious matter?

Mr. Redwood: There are several issues which the takeover panel can pursue with the adviser or the company making the bid, if it feels that there were improprieties. It could impose several penalties on either party if a wrong had been committed.

The common law, notably the law of misrepresentation, also applies to statements made during takeover bids. If a shareholder suffers financial loss as a result of a misrepresentation in the document, he may be able to sue for compensation in the courts. Employees are protected by the general provisions of employment law, but there are no job guarantees.

Section 47 of the Financial Services Act 1986 makes it an offence to make misleading or false statements, in this case to induce a person to sell shares. Similar provisions existed in the predecessor legislation, the Prevention of Fraud (Investments) Act 1958, which was in force at the time of the successful Scottish and Newcastle bid. Under that legislation evidence would have to be presented showing that the promises made at the time of the bid were made recklessly or in bad faith. If the hon. Gentleman has any more such evidence, I will consider it carefully, alongside the points that he has put to us tonight which I should like to consider further with advice.

Scottish and Newcastle has suggested that any job losses at the Lion brewery will be the result of the Government's measures to promote competition in the supply of beer. I believe that the hon. Gentleman does not agree with that, and I certainly do not accept it. I would expect Scottish and Newcastle to benefit in trading terms from the Government's measures. As a company with traditional strengths in the free trade, it has everything to gain from a liberalisation and expansion of the market. We have seen something of this since 1 May, when tenants of the five national brewers have been free to take a guest beer.

In his statement on 2 July this year, on publication of Scottish and Newcastle's annual report, the chairman said:

"It is possible for the Company to take advantage of these provisions of the Beer Orders which enable it to sell guest beers and other drinks into the tied estates of the major brewers. I anticipate that the Company will obtain significant trading benefit from this current preferred situation and from the further loosening of the tie in 1992."

That optimism appears to be confirmed by the latest results. The company's overall beer volumes were up 2 per cent. Strong cask sales were reported, particularly for the Theakston's range. Theakston sales were then reported to be up 18 per cent. for the year, and 50 per cent. higher than at the time of the acquisition of Matthew Brown. At the annual general meeting on 30 August, the chairman also said:

"our beer sales are ahead of last year, giving cause for continued confidence."

This is the picture of a company successfully taking advantage of the new more competitive trading environment to which the Government measures are contributing—not one that has been knocked sideways by continued intervention to promote competition in the market.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): What happened to the stock exchange surveillance department's inquiry into insider dealing when Scottish and Newcastle took over Matthew Brown? Is it not true that the department submitted a report identifying those people who had engaged in insider dealing to the Department of Trade and Industry, yet no action was taken? Why were no prosecutions brought when individuals were identified?

Mr. Redwood: In general, the Department brings prosecutions in all those cases where it has collected sufficient evidence to make it worth while, or when other authorities have referred to it suitable cases that could be brought. I cannot answer the hon. Gentleman precisely tonight about the details of that particular case. I shall write to him when I have had a chance to review the file and to see the evidence behind his question. The hon. Gentleman will then be more fully in the picture.

I have identified three possible avenues down which the question of undertakings could be pursued. I have explained that the Government were aware that the regime governing undertakings was not strong under the previous legislation. That has been remedied by the measures we took in the Companies Act 1989, which apply to takeovers and mergers now under way or in prospect. That Act cannot, of course, apply to the takeover of Matthew Brown, which took place under the previous regime.

I promise the hon. Member for Blackburn that I shall study the record of the debate further to see if there is anything that the Department can properly do. I hope, however, that the hon. Gentleman will also pursue the case in the ways that I have identified if he feels that there is sufficient evidence to do so.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at fifteen minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 23 November 1990

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Sir George Young.]*

9.35 am

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. John Gummer): We are discussing today, albeit on a motion for the Adjournment of the House, an issue which may have the greatest effect upon our future—the need to increase trade between nations, not only developed nations but those which are developing. Obviously, trade is of the utmost importance to any country, but for the United Kingdom, not only today but as a historical fact, trade is at the centre of our economic fortunes, and we cannot in any sense underestimate the degree to which a successful general agreement on tariffs and trade round is vital for increased prosperity.

I hope that we can debate the matter with an understanding that this is not only of importance to ourselves, the European Community of which we are a part, the western world and, indeed, the new countries which have emerged from the socialist east, but to the developing countries for whom access to markets is crucial and to those of us who see the moral responsibility of the west and of rich countries to them.

If that is so, it is the Government's responsibility to see that the negotiations are brought to a successful conclusion, and in that we have support in large measure from all parts of the House. That means that the talks must be brought to a fair and honourable conclusion. There must be a fair exchange, so that trade may be carried out on all sides. I hate the phrase, "level playing field", but unless I introduce it into the debate we will probably not be able to move further. We need a level playing field, and the purpose of the GATT round is to achieve that.

I hope, too, that we shall recognise in the negotiations that all parties have their own axes to grind. Sometimes, people talk as if only the United Kingdom and the rest of the European Community pressed for the coverage of their special difficulties. Most hon. Members recognise that many of the high-flown statements of those with whom we negotiate are specially tailored to press for a particular way of solving problems which just happens to be of value to their industry, services or agriculture. Therefore, I hope that no hon. Member will feel constrained to put forward the special needs of the United Kingdom and those aspects of United Kingdom trade, commerce, services and agriculture which he or she wishes to defend.

We do so realising that the GATT round is essentially a package. It cannot be unpicked. We cannot leave on one side whole areas of activity. That which is important to one country may be less important to others, but it cannot be left to one side.

For this nation, unrestricted access appears to be a danger, yet we are negotiating with countries for which access is the only thing that matters. We cannot suggest that there are simple ways out of some of the problems that face us.

We are seeking in GATT to recognise that trade patterns have changed and that we must adapt the system if it is to survive. If it does not survive, there will be a major interruption in the world's ability to provide for higher standards of living in the rich west and to do something about the appalling living standards in much of the world. We need to wipe out the shadowy trade barriers that have grown in the margins of GATT. We need to strengthen GATT so that no country feels driven to unilateral action and trade war tactics. We need to extend it to encompass trade in services, direct international investment and intellectual property rights. The importance to world trade of all those aspects has grown vastly.

GATT still has the feeling of a system that was produced to cover trade that was largely in manufactured goods, but there has been phenomenal growth, in the developed world in particular, in other aspects which have not been properly covered. We have set ourselves essential goals. That is important now, above all, when nations whose economies have long been crippled by protectionism and managed trade are courageously embracing democratic capitalism.

I feel more than usually passionate about the GATT round because of my visits to eastern European countries. Obviously, agriculture and food are at the base of their problems, but I returned with an appreciation of the devastation caused by protectionism not only to a country's industries and trade but to its very nature. It cuts nations off from their natural intercourse with other nations. It makes it impossible for industries to thrive and flourish, and it ensures that backwardness is the order of the day. Unless we solve those problems, we will be in an infinitely more dangerous position and the GATT round will disappear into a series of bilateral protectionist arrangements.

There needs to be a substantial reduction in the tariffs and other barriers to trade that face British manufacturing companies. We need an agreement for the first time to establish international rules liberalising trade in services because they now account for 55 per cent. of our gross domestic product—an amazing turnabout, which we must recognise internationally. We want better and more effective protection for patents, copyright and trademarks. We must have much more effective measures against counterfeiting. We cannot do without an agreement that will minimise the restrictive rules which can be applied to British companies investing overseas.

We need to agree to strengthen the GATT system, especially the system for settling trade disputes. We need to be able to take more effective action through GATT against overseas Governments who unfairly protect their industries. We need agreement by developing countries, particularly the most advanced, that they will become more fully integrated into the multilateral system and take on a share of responsibilities under GATT that is consistent with their degree of economic development.

It would be wrong to reform GATT in a way that left those developing countries in a position where they were thought of as a separate group that was not able to take a growing part of their responsibilities. In that sense, GATT

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is a means whereby they can grow into the world community. As that growth occurs, their industries, commerce and standards of living will improve.

If all this is true, the taxpayer stands to gain significantly from reductions in the costs imposed by protection. If we are going to ask for market liberalisation from other people, we cannot expect not to open our markets. Our industries must be free to operate in and adapt to the world of competition. They must be lean, fit and healthy. No country can afford the costs of artificial protection in the long term, penalising every citizen not once, but twice—as a taxpayer and as a consumer.

The particular problems that the textile industry has faced from low-cost imports have been recognised for many years through restrictions such as the multi-fibre arrangement. I am sad that, for reasons outside my control, there was no specific debate on textiles. The Opposition had intended to have such a debate, but I am sure that we will divide the time satisfactorily between the main matters of contention. I am sure that the House agrees that that was a sensible subject for the Opposition to put forward because it is crucial for all of us. It is not easy to answer questions on this issue because the answers pull in opposite directions.

It is particularly helpful that the MFA's future is being considered in the context of the multilateral GATT negotiations. That may be one advantage of debating this matter today rather than earlier. These global negotiations include many matters of great interest to the textile industry and to manufacturing and to services as a whole. Increasingly, restructuring of the textile industry, which has been possible because of the MFA, has enabled that industry to open up markets abroad. Those textile companies are beginning to find that they need access and that the access problem is no longer the one-way difficulty that it seemed to be in the past. They too, recognise that the GATT problems pull in opposite directions.

We have a draft text providing for the phasing out of the MFA over a period of years on the basis of the existing restrictions. The phase-out will be achieved over a period yet to be agreed. That is one matter still open to negotiation. The broad aim of the Commission, supported by the United Kingdom, is to take account as far as possible of the sensitivities of European industry, of which United Kingdom industry is a part.

There is clearly scope for some products, especially those not under MFA restraint, to be integrated immediately into GATT and subject to its rules. If that happened, it would be a good earnest of our intent. If the main textile exporting countries are to agree to the arrangements on textiles—satisfactory arrangements are a condition for their agreement to the final Uruguay round package as a whole—there needs to be an improvement in market access for them at an early stage.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): As the Minister said, this is an important subject for many textile constituencies, including Bradford. Before the right hon. Gentleman leaves the subject of textiles, will he say what he has in mind for enforcing all the desirable aims of stopping counterfeiting, setting up anti-dumping measures and so on? How will he insist through GATT that those measures are carried out and are effective, to ensure that the industry survives?

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Gentleman is right in saying that policing and enforcement are vital. Our experience in recent years has been particularly bad on that front in terms of not just textiles but right across the board. Much of the argument about intellectual property rights, counterfeiting and similar matters has arisen because we have not been good at enforcement or at finding out where difficulties have occurred or what the problem has been. That is at the centre of the current argument about better enforcement. The United Kingdom has pressed the Commission on that matter. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry will deal with it in his speech—no doubt at greater length, now that the hon. Gentleman has raised that point.

The hon. Gentleman is right in that nobody in the industry can have confidence in the solutions that are found in GATT unless they believe that they will be imposed on everybody. If they feel that this is a nice deal between those who will obey the law but that it will be flouted by a number of countries that will not obey the law, they, rightly, will not be prepared to accept the difficulties that GATT imposes on them.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): As well as enforcement, which is crucial, will the Minister confirm that it is still very much in the Government's mind that the original Uruguay declaration made it clear that access to third-country markets was an essential condition of any transitional phasing out of the MFA? If the Government do not return with some cast-iron guarantees on that linkage—increasing imports at the same time as industries have a chance to export their way out of some of the difficulties that increased import penetration will cause—the Minister will get a rough reception on his return from hon. Members who represent textile constituencies.

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Gentleman is right. We must have the improvements before phasing out the MFA. There must be that linkage and it is all part of the present negotiations. The United Kingdom has been firm in making that clear. The Commission understands that position clearly, remembering that it, too, must sell it, not only to the United Kingdom but to other member states of the European Community, and we are not the only country that feels strongly about it. So there is real pressure on that issue from the Community point of view.

I hope we shall see that the textile industry now has a real interest in opening up markets for our products and in the orderly, over time, removal of protection, which was always intended to be temporary. Members in all parts of the House recognise that there is a contradiction in our minds in that connection. On the one hand, we want to enable people who are starting on the road to improve their economies, stage by stage to find markets. On the other, we cannot do that at the cost of industries which employ our own citizens. There is a balance to be struck and I hope that in all the speeches that we make on the issue we remind audiences of both aspects of the impact.

On a personal note, I found it necessary the other day to repeat something that Dr. Allen Booth, a former head of Christian Aid, wrote in a letter in which he chastised an archbishop, when he wrote that it was all very well to complain about not helping the developing countries, but one should not do that at the same time as objecting to the closure of boot and shoe factories in Northampton. One

must recognise that both are part and parcel of the same problem. GATT seeks to cut through that and to find a way of bringing the two difficulties together.

The House will want me to comment on the area in the GATT negotiations with which I have been personally involved, and that is agriculture. I have the issue burnt on my heart because we have sat longer and argued to a greater tedium on that than on almost any other subject I can remember. There was a point at which some of my family wondered whether I had a special arrangement in Luxembourg, because it seemed that it would be easier to commute to London from Luxembourg than to Luxembourg from London. Although they were frustrating discussions and it was necessary sometimes to remind our Community partners of their responsibility to be communautaire, in action as well as in fine phraseology, in the end we got an agreement on a programme to be presented to the GATT round.

I hope that, in retrospect, we can recognise the real problems for agriculture of the proposition that must be faced. It is not easy for the British farming industry to accept the kind of proposition that we have put to the GATT round, and it is no good ignoring the effects of the offer that is before us.

Some people overstate it in the sense that they do not recognise that the 30 per cent. relates to a reduction in support—they sometimes think that it is a reduction in price—and they do not recognise that it has already partly been achieved in the unilateral decision—in this case I am in favour of unilateralism—of the European Community.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Ah.

Mr. Gummer: I thought I would say that, so giving the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) an opportunity to intervene.

Mr. Skinner: I am obliged.

Mr. Gummer: I am charitable to the hon. Gentleman, whose fascination with agriculture is well known.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi), the Chairman of the Select Committee on the Environment, will agree that, unless we have a healthy agriculture, the countryside cannot be looked after, and that the healthiness of agriculture demands a return from agricultural activity sufficient to look after the countryside. Those who talk as if we can divorce environmental considerations from reasonable returns for the farming community do not understand the situation in our rural areas.

Agriculture remains the major activity in our rural areas and is concerned with looking after 80 per cent. of the countryside. Much of that involves looking after areas such as the rolling hills of Derbyshire, which would be much less attractive if agriculture did not exist. Indeed, the farmer has created that landscape, as he has created the landscape in the rest of the nation.

It is true that agriculture has always been covered by GATT, but in practice it has been subject to a range of special provisions which have meant that the fundamental disciplines of GATT have not applied to agriculture as clearly or as strictly as they have to other areas of trade. The waiver granted to the United States in 1955 is a case in point.

By the mid-1980s, the costs of agricultural support had grown to unprecedented levels. The OECD estimates that the costs reached about $290 billion in 1987. Many developed countries had in place extensive and complex systems of support which, combined with increasing productivity and stable demand, led to the emergence of substantial surpluses.

That is why agriculture must be part of the Uruguay round, and I am sure that hon. Members will not argue that one could have a GATT round without agriculture being part of it. But we need real progress towards substantial, progressive reductions in agricultural support and protection, sustained over an agreed period, resulting in correcting and preventing restrictions and distortions in world agricultural markets. That is the agreed position of GATT.

Hon. Members will recall that I had to be sharp, particularly with the Germans and French, because, having agreed to that, the propositions that they were putting to the negotiating team from the Commission were clearly not meeting it. One cannot make the statement and then say, "We shall not change the CAP", or, "We shall not reach out to any of our partners in the negotiations." I fear that that was part of the problems involved in the recent discussions in Luxembourg and Brussels.

But there was a second aspect which many people missed. We spent too long pretending that the GATT round would not come about. I am amazed at the degree to which people, particularly in this country, had not faced up to the issues. Opposition Members will agree that, in our discussions with people in the countryside, we found that farmers and non-farmers alike had no idea what GATT would mean for them, for the rural community and for the consumer. None of that had been brought out into the open, and some of the organisations which represent farmers and others should have got the issues on their agendas much earlier.

The difficulties involved in grappling with agricultural reform are obvious from the long arguments that we have had in the Community. But I hope that we recognise the strength of the position that we have now proposed. I cannot propose in the world forum anything that would do down Community farmers as against other farmers in the world.

We must have a basis of measurement that is fair. An aggregate measure of support is vital to any proper solution. It casts doubt on the credibility of some of the proposals when one sees how long it has taken some of our partners outside the Community to feel that they can accept an agreed measure of support. They were suggesting that their form of support did not count, but that everybody else's did. There is still too much of that attitude in the propositions that are being presented, especially from the other side of the Atlantic.

That support, measured on an aggregate basis, will be reduced by 30 per cent. over the 10 years from 1986, the start of the Uruguay round. That is not an artificial date that has been picked for the convenience of a specific nation—1986 is the year when we started to negotiate the round. It is the date from which the European Community recognised that if it was to give the sort of response to which it was committed under the Uruguay round, that would have to be put under way.

If the process did not start then, it would be too big a thing to ask of our farmers. Therefore, it would be wholly improper not to count in the calculations the significant amount, varying between 11 and 15 per cent.—depending

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on how it is measured—which has already been achieved as a result of the Uruguay round, not out of any other ulterior motive.

The provisions cover the period from 1986 to 1996 and will take into account what has already been done and the pain that we have already borne. It focuses on the level of support for commodities and, above all, it faces the fact that the European Community has an integrated system, parts of which cannot be dissociated from others.

Some people are attracted by the views of the United States, which suggests that we should do something special about export refunds. We can do much to ensure that export refunds are affected equally across the board by the 30 per cent. reduction. Some fear that reduction will not have the same effect on export refunds as on the other parts of the CAP and that, in other words, we can make it much more transparent. The idea that the whole system can be distorted by a special operation relating to export refunds is advanced only by those who do not understand the system. We must take that point seriously.

In any case, our proposals lead to other changes in the CAP. They will mean a switch from a variable levy to a new system of charges on imports from third countries, together with the "rebalancing" which is a sort of Community code. I wish that we could have a group of people in the House who could prepare what I would call "real English" rather than "Euro-English" for some of these phrases. We get so used to using this language that we forget that the majority of people could not possibly understand what "rebalancing" is. In fact, it would even up the present level—*[Interruption.]* I am prepared to be anti-anybody if I think that that person is wrong. That is why I am so often anti the hon. Member for Bolsover—he is wrong so often. I should like our language—real English—to dominate and not some pseudo pidgin English, which we encounter all too often.

Mr. Skinner: Get rid of "communautaire".

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Gentleman does not like the word "communautaire". Perhaps he could give me a good alternative. He has been giving the Prime Minister some good ideas, so perhaps he could do the same for me.

In addition, it has been accepted that there will be a category of policies that will not be subject to the programme of cuts. That has come to be known as the "green box". This country must ensure that we provide help for farmers for environmental reasons. We must keep sheep and cattle in the hillsides because they are crucial environmentally. We must also ensure that the costs of caring for the countryside and of improving the countryside are fully met. That, too, may mean extra help.

We must recognise that Britain has been the leader in this area. Britain's environmental proposals have all-party support. My right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling) put such proposals to the Community when Britain had the chairmanship. Those proposals have now become the basis for most countries' environmental activities. The establishment of environmentally sensitive areas represents one of the major changes in the environmental package in Europe and elsewhere. There are also many other measures that can be used as a means of enabling farming community to carry out one of its major j which is to look after the countryside.

Mr. Richard Livsey (Brecon and Radnor): Does Minister agree that, given the drop in market prices livestock in the past 12 months in Britain—especiall the beef and sheep sectors, in which there has been a d of 25 per cent. in some cases—although the environme support measures are welcome, the resources that provided are insufficient to make up for the drop in ma prices for the livestock farmer?

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Gentleman has raised a cru point. We all agree with the burden of his comments, I am surprised that he referred to "the drop in ma prices . . . in Britain". The first thing that we n recognise is that there is a drop in market pr throughout the Community. We must be careful no isolate the British agricultural position from that in rest of the Community. This is a Community problem. drop in prices is a European and, indeed, a wider probl The hon. Gentleman should be careful about making direct link.

I hope that the hon. Gentleman will accept that in e area in which I can do so under Community rules, I h sought to help the less favoured areas. The Gentleman is a member of a party that is inclined to r to its "communautaire" nature, but I notice that his p is communautaire in general but rather nationalisti particular. Perhaps we should be common in both rega which is what I try to be.

The Community is putting forward a tough pack but it would be phased in over a number of years and would, I believe, allow farmers adequate time to adjus will mean continuing price cuts. Those will, I appreci come on top of several years of pressure on farm inco —not least in the United Kingdom where profitability been at historically low levels for most farm enterpr The House will also know that the United Kingdom strongly and consistently supported the Commis proposal since it first emerged in September.

Our reputation in the Community has been enhan by our willingness to take that Communautaire stan have been less than pleased by the attitude taken by s people in this country, who are sometimes incline attack the Government for not taking such a stand, who have then complained about it in the very are which we have taken such a stand, and to such ef There is no doubt that, in all essentials, this packag what was proposed by the Commission in the first pl Without Britain's support, that would not be the case we would not be able to start the negotiations.

I must explain why we think that this is essential. a coherent proposal, which covers all that it ought. It realistic proposal and is the minimum that stands a ch of being negotiated. The United Kingdom must face fact that the United States and the Cairns group asked for what appear to be more radical goals—of per cent. reduction in internal support and a 90 per reduction in export subsidies. However, that is very m less than it appears.

I hope that the United States has now stopped megaphone diplomacy that has characterised its appro so far. Headline totals are not what they seem: they do cover the same range, or start with the same dates,

they contain curious information about income aids and deficiency payments. Although some aspects of the proposals may be helpful and, although if one examines the two sets of proposals on a common basis, one finds that they are much closer than those who pursue megaphone diplomacy would have us believe, there are significant differences. The United States has put forward proposals that are closely allied to its own interests in such a way as to suggest to some of the popular media—which may not have had time to read the proposals in detail—a world view or a special moral position.

We should remember that the United States is trying to treat its deficiency payments solely as internal aid despite their impact on exports, and virtually to abolish export subsidies—a position that is perfectly acceptable to the United States because it does not make much use of such subsidies. But support under deficiency payments will have exactly the same direct effect on the cost of products in the market. Whether one gives £100 in deficiency payments or £100 in export subsidies, the potential export price will be diminished by £100. One cannot ignore that; it is a clear economic fact, and anyone who suggests differently is suggesting that the British farmers should be disadvantaged vis-a-vis their mid-western counterparts.

There is one important issue that divides the Government and the Opposition: the Opposition have sought to disadvantage British farmers by accepting the mid-western farmers' proposals. This Government and this Minister will not disadvantage the British farmer, and I hope that every farmer in the country knows that the Opposition are determined not to fight for a level playing field to enable the CAP to be regarded on equal terms with the United States proposal.

If we are to pursue the negotiations, our major partners must realise that they have set their sights too high. They have done so because their farming is different from ours. One can leave aside large tracts of prairie without causing great concern to environmentalists, townsmen or suburban dwellers. We cannot do that in the United Kingdom or the rest of Europe. Most of our countryside lies within 15 miles of a major town and we cannot leave it to go to rack and ruin. Our farmers must be able to gain sufficient resources from the market and support to enable them to look after the land.

If we are not prepared to go as far as some would like, it is because we are not prepared to betray our countryside. However, we are prepared to go as far as we can, bearing in mind our farmers' difficulties. We are determined to do that without dismantling or abandoning the CAP, because freer market conditions are necessary for our farmers to prosper. In addition, the advantages that will flow to the rest of the economy are essential if we are to give our farmers the support that they need. The support that farmers need must come from somewhere and it cannot come from a nation whose trade, industry and services are debilitated as a result of protectionism.

The success of the GATT round is important to farmers directly because it will open up the market and indirectly because it will enable them to operate within a Community that is rich enough to pay for the environment that it demands. We cannot expect our farmers to enter the next five years without some reduction in support, and the support provisions therefore need to be considered most carefully. But if we are to provide extra help or to reassess the way in which we help farmers, we must do so on a fair basis.

As I said at the outset, we want a level playing field; we want the Community of which we are a member to be on equal terms with the rest of the world. It is also vital that we should have a level playing field within the Community. I am not prepared to accept discrimination between the countries of Europe, however much it is dressed up as rural help of one sort or another, although I accept that it is necessary to give help in certain circumstances.

One important change that we discussed has not been sufficiently noted. The French farming leaders have suggested that France and Germany failed to secure the changes for which they hoped, and I believe that they are right. But Britain secured one important change in two separate parts of the negotiating brief—the introduction of the word "non-discriminatory" in both the negotiations and in the measures introduced by the Community following the GATT round. We were absolutely right to do that.

The Council has pressed the Commission to come up with assurances that cuts in market support will be accompanied by measures to offset the impact on certain regions and certain groups of producers. The Commission has to make formal proposals and the Council will then debate them and reach decisions in accordance with the normal procedures. The first proposals may emerge very soon—possibly before the end of this year—and, to judge by indications given so far, we shall have the further development of certain schemes such as set-aside and extensification. New measures may be proposed. The process would not amount to a complete transformation of the CAP but, rather an evolutionary shift towards more direct and targeted payments.

What would be the implications for British farmers if the Community's proposal were implemented? It would mean lower levels of support and some shift in the balance between support given through management of markets and support given by direct payments.

The support reductions need to be seen in their proper perspective. I fear that percentage targets set by the Community and elsewhere cause more alarm than is justified. We do not yet know how cuts will fall or what their main effects will be. That will have to be discussed by the Community.

The European Community has entered into the GATT round with every intention of making it a success. I believe such success to be vital for the whole country—consumers, manufacturers, commercial people and agriculturists alike. We cannot afford to fail. The success of the round is essential if we are to achieve the increase in world trade that will so greatly improve opportunities for all our people.

It is especially important for our farming community that we secure an agreement which enables it to continue to look after the land and to provide the food that we need but which also brings it closer to the market and so gives it new opportunities. Only a richer, more effective trading community can create the wealth on which support for our farmers can be based.

I give farmers and the House the pledge that in these negotiations the Community, fully supported by the United Kingdom, will negotiate for a fair deal in the world for Community farmers. It will also negotiate for the same sort of deal for Community industrialists, manufacturers and traders. I also pledge that the United Kingdom's continued and constructive aim and utter determination is to ensure a fair deal for British farmers in the Community

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itself. That can be achieved only if the changes in support systems and the reorientation—to use another horrible Euroword—in the CAP are on the basis of equality and non-discrimination and aim at preserving competitive agriculture.

There is no place in Europe for a policy which suggests that we should solidify, stratify and significantly ossify agriculture in its present state. That is not the way to compete with the rest of the world, to protect our food supplies should there be a future shortage, or to give British farmers a fair deal. It is not the way to ensure that the consumer gets good food at reasonable prices.

The GATT round is a necessary part of the liberalisation of trade and of the improvement of agriculture. It must be followed by changes in the common agricultural policy which adapt but do not destroy it and which ensure that Britain's farmers continue to have a fair deal in the world for their products. It must also ensure that our farmers have the kind of support which protects their non-discriminatory position in a Community that is constantly inclined to look backwards to older methods and circumstances. We need competitive agriculture that is properly protected so that the environment can be looked after by the only people who can do it, those who have contributed so much to our landscape and our nation, Britain's farmers.

10.21 am

Dr. David Clark (South Shields): I shall begin by agreeing with the Minister. That comes naturally to the Opposition when we understand that unity is required. I wish him well in the negotiations because we want them to succeed. The House will agree that GATT has served the world well for the past 40 years. In that time, we have seen the global economy grow consistently at a rate of 4 per cent. Trade has grown even faster, at a rate of 6 per cent. That success has meant that a repeat of many of the worldwide depressions that occurred in the years prior to GATT have largely been avoided.

As we move to update GATT under the Uruguay round, success is vital. As the Minister has reminded us, failure in negotiating this round would mean disaster for world trade and international relations and would be especially damaging to the British economy. Failure would lead to extra protectionism, and that would be accompanied by reduced exports and increased unemployment. I am afraid that Britain will be among the worst affected. Our interest rate is 14 per cent., the highest among the G7 countries. Inflation is touching 11 per cent. and 1·7 million people are unemployed. Only yesterday, we heard that the balance of payments deficit for October was £1·1 billion. For the last full year that deficit was £23·8 billion.

All independent economists agree that our economy is already in recession. Failure in GATT will make the position even worse. I say without pleasure that the Uruguay round may fail. Carla Hills, the trade representative of the USA, recently warned OECD members that trade wars could break out if substantial agreements were not reached in financial discussions later this month. A trade war between the United States and the Community would have catastrophic effects not only on us but on the wider world.

It is ironic that, at the very moment in post-war histo when the barriers between east and west are coming dow we may be erecting new trade barriers and creating oth blocs in the world. Increased protectionism would especially damaging to the economies of the developi countries and to the emerging democracies of easte Europe as they emerge from their communist past into more democratic future. The rightful aspirations of t people of those countries can be met only by an expansi of world trade. For all those reasons, we cann countenance failure in the Uruguay round.

We appreciate that there are many difficult issues, so of which were raised by the Minister. We appreciate th there has to be a trade-off, not only between nations a blocs but between the developed and the underdevelop countries. We want to gain some benefits and so do th We recognise that issues such as intellectual prope rights, services, textiles and cars are difficult. However, the Minister rightly said, the key to the whole round agriculture because, in a sense, that sphere of activity h not been covered by GATT as tightly as other spheres the past 40 years.

A liberalisation of world agricultural trade is vital. that sphere protectionism is rife, with the result that t economies of many developing countries are suppresse leading to the excruciating poverty that we all abh Something must be done. As the Minister also said, general terms or, to use the American expression, ball-park terms, the Cairns group, representing agricultural exporting countries with a population doul that of the EC and the United States combined—that is amazing statistic—has suggested that all agricultu support should be swept away. One of the countries in th large group, New Zealand, has just done that.

As the Minister said, in the same headline terms t United States has suggested a compromise position of a per cent. reduction as a generality. The EC is entering t negotiations with an offer of 30 per cent., half of which h already been achieved. I listened carefully to the Minis who said that that was our starting position. Am I right thinking that, during the course of the negotiations, th percentage may change? It will have to change if we are be successful.

Mr. Gummer: I would not like the hon. Gentleman be misled. If I use the term "starting position", it is becau it is precisely that: we have started with it. I do not thi that there is much elbow room there. If the ho Gentleman thinks that our farmers will be able to acc very much more than that, he has spoken to differe farmers from those to whom I have spoken. We a battling for that, because the Community is already grea stretched in its proposals.

Dr. Clark: The Minister said that the proposal was t minimum which stood a chance of success in t negotiations. Those were his precise words. We m contrast that with the statement by the American secreta for agriculture that that bid was not even in the ball-pa to use his colourful jargon. We are in a serious positi Before I explain our specific approach, I remind the Ho of the declaration of intent signed in Uruguay in 1986 our Government and more than 100 other Governmen It said:

"There is an urgent need to bring more discipline a predictability to world agricultural trade by correcting a preventing restrictions and distortions."

We should have pursued that stated intention with vigour, and taken the opportunity of these GATT talks to achieve a fundamental reform of the CAP, which does not serve well either the consumer or the farmers, who are so beloved of the Prime Minister.

I do not understand why Conservative Members shy away from reform; the National Farmers Union, of all bodies, has come out in favour of a fundamental reform of the CAP, so it is not a belief held only by the Labour party. Hon. Members know that the CAP is nonsense. It is not a viable or sensible way to support agriculture. How can we defend a system in which it has been estimated that at least £6 billion a year is lost through fraud?

As Agra Europe pointed out in June:

"the policy is so full of absurd and lavishly financed mechanisms designed to support every small or large, real or imagined weakness in the market, that it is often possible to make large profits merely by moving goods around rather than actually buying and selling."

That is nonsense and simply crazy. It is the only system of agricultural support in which the taxpayer pays a subsidy to farmers only to have to pay for food in the shops at a higher price than if the subsidy had not been paid in the first place. It is an "Alice in Wonderland" scenario.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Is my hon. Friend aware that one of the consequences of the European agricultural policy is the dumping of food exports on Third-world countries, with devastating results for their production capability, and investments in agricultural infrastructure?

Dr. Clark: As always, my hon. Friend has drawn the attention of the House to an important point, and one that I hope to develop in a moment or so. I am grateful that he has reminded us of a further folly of the CAP.

It is beyond the ken of Labour Members why the consumer should pay such high prices. Why should sugar be anything up to four or five times the world price? Why is wholesale beef costing four times the world price, and why are dairy prices double the world price? It does not make sense.

Mr. Gummer: I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Gentleman, but I hope that we can clear up some of our difficulties in this debate. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the concept of a world price when there is so much subsidy throughout the world is an artificial one? If we did not have subsidies, the so-called world price would rise considerably. Saying to the consumer that he is paying four times the world price for something suggests that, without subsidies, he would get the product at a quarter of the price, but he would not. Either the food would not be there, or it would be there at a higher price. There are other mechanisms, but that one is particularly misleading.

Dr. Clark: The Minister is right to say that, if the largest export subsidiser in the world—the CAP—stopped its export subsidies, world prices would rise, because world prices are low—for the poignant point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn), that the EC dumps, at a great cost to the taxpayer, so much on the economies of other countries. I shall return to this point later and the Minister may want to intervene again.

The OECD estimates that the cost of the CAP was £52·6 billion in 1989. Last year, the average household of four in the United Kingdom, according to the Government's National Consumer Council, was paying £14 a week more than it should have been towards the cost of the CAP—£8 in higher food prices and £6 in tax—and the figure for this year will be even higher. I remind the Minister that the burden on the poorer families who spend a larger proportion of their income on food is greater. That is simply unfair.

The 1990 EC budget for agriculture allows for an increase in subsidies to 26 million ecu. Even one of the Minister's advisers, Mr. Carden, admitted only last week at a conference in Harrogate that it would be difficult to keep the system running at the present support level because the CAP is simply grossly inefficient. For every £10 spent on agriculture support, only £4 goes to the farmers.

Mr. Andy Stewart (Sherwood): Give us the money.

Dr. Clark: That is the weakness of the system. The hon. Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart) speaks like the farmers. Joking apart, he has a good point. The farmers produce food and look after the countryside. When the taxpayer pays £10 for agriculture support but the farmer gets only £4 of it, we want to know why the other £6 goes for storage, destruction and export subsidies. I cannot understand why, if Conservative Members so clearly agree with our logic, they cannot bring themselves to tell the Minister to back the NFU and the Labour party and to press for some fundamental reforms in the CAP.

Mr. Jerry Wiggin (Weston-super-Mare): What does the Labour party propose to do about the agricultural surpluses of Europe—burn them?

Dr. Clark: I shall come to that point. The real point that needs to be made is that, when the CAP was designed, we were not an exporting Community, as Mansholt, the architect of it, recently made clear. We need to devise an agricultural support system that allows us to avoid creating surpluses, because surpluses cost this country dear.

Mr. Gummer: As the hon. Member has invited me to support his policy, will he, in simple terms, answer my hon. Friend the Member for Weston-super-Mare (Mr. Wiggin) and tell us exactly what he proposes to do and how what he proposes to do will be accepted by the European Community? We can all make propositions, but how does the hon. Member expect the other 11 nations to take this proposition? Which of them does he think will support it?

Dr. Clark: As always, the Minister raises real issues, and I shall try to deal with them. Neither the Minister nor the Prime Minister were successful, because she had a golden opportunity in February 1988 when the veto did not apply, and the CAP was legally bankrupt. We could have dictated our terms, and the Prime Minister went with the intention of doing so. I remember the economic brief, circulated by the Treasury at the NFU annual general meeting, in which the Prime Minister pointed out the cost of the CAP to the average household of four. She backed down late on the Sunday evening and left us with a tinkered-with system that is not working and will not work. The Treasury economic brief disappeared from the scene and we cannot get hold of it any longer. I shall return to the point about our proposed reform of the CAP later.

[Dr. Clark]

The key point that the hon. Member for Sherwood allowed me to make is that we dump our surpluses in the world, wrecking the economies of developing countries. The EC Court of Auditors report this year said:

"Over the past two years, the subsidised export of agricultural produce to countries outside the Community has replaced intervention storage as the principal instrument by which the Community maintains the equilibrium of the internal market. Export refunds have superseded public intervention stores as the keystone of the price guarantee system under the Common Agricultural Policy."

Despite the much-vaunted reforms of the CAP over the past few years, such as the introduction of milk quotas and stabilisers, the CAP is out of control again. We have spent a large sum on export subsidies, but, despite that, and in addition to it, costs are increasing again. The Minister has had to admit that he will have to overspend by as much as £410 million on the CAP and the intervention board this year. If costs this year and for the next two years are added together, we shall have to increase expenditure on intervention by almost £1 billion.

Despite our huge subsidies on exports, we still cannot get rid of our agricultural produce. There is a major increase in intervention stocks. Between October 1989 and October 1990, there was a doubling of the EEC's stores of butter, a fourfold increase in the amount of beef in storage and a 68-fold increase in the amount of skimmed milk powder that is in store. That is crazy.

Even if we sweep aside financial constraints and economic considerations, the CAP has not achieved its stated objective of retaining those who work in agriculture in the countryside. In 1957, there were 15 million farmers in the original six member states. There are now only 5·6 million farmers. There has been a 62 per cent. decline in their numbers. We in Britain have suffered a similar decline. On every day since the Prime Minister took office, six farmers have been forced off the land and 16 farm workers have lost their jobs. I do not regard that as a very successful agriculture support system.

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale): How many on the continent at the lower end of the scale?

Dr. Clark: I gave the figures and the hon. Gentleman should have listened.

If we consider some of the broader perspectives of the CAP we find further oddities. For example, it is ludicrous that 4 per cent. of the CAP's budget goes to both tobacco and vegetables when tobacco is seen to cause cancer and vegetables are believed to help prevent it. The system is faulty in economic terms, in retaining a rural population and in producing healthy foods.

Faced with that, I should have thought that any Government, especially a British one, would have taken the opportunity of the GATT negotiations to put pressure on our EEC colleagues to engage in a major reform of the CAP. Unless we do so the problems will become greater. Unless we succeed, a subsidy war will break out between the United States and the EEC, and the result will be an even more expensive CAP.

This is where the Labour party opposes the Government's approach to the GATT agriculture talks. The Government have failed to grasp the significance of the linkage between CAP reform and the GATT. Despite the condemnation of the Minister, the Government have slavishly followed the United States' linear approach to the problem by examining only how we can mi subsidy cuts. It is not surprising that they negative.

The Minister made some derogatory comm the American deficiency payment system. Why been considering the possibility of introducing payments in Europe? That might be a much mo way of providing food at more reasonable pri consumer and of providing support for far system worked well until we entered the EEC. however, been costed since. It is said that suc would cost too much, but, remembering that th agricultural support might have to be reduced, we consider the possibility of deficiency pa ascertain whether they constitute an option? I d the answer because the Opposition have been carry out the costings, but the Government necessary facilities. They have computers and undertake the computer projections. Let us statistics.

Mr. Gummer: In effect, the hon. Gentle "Why?" I shall tell him. He knows that there is putting forward propositions that are unacc every other member of the Community. He Britain, in supporting the Commission, manage what I outlined in my speech only after seven long meetings. We did so in the teeth of oppo most other member states. The hon. Gentl forward a preposterous proposal that is not ac any other member state. That shows how out Labour party is. It could not negotiate European Community and, thank God, it will n chance to do so.

Dr. Clark: I recall hearing it said in yesterday, and I read in "Today" this mornin Chancellor of the Exchequer was urging th proposal for the reform of the monetary system I recall it being said that when that proposal wa the United Kingdom was in a minority of one there had been careful costings and the homework had been done. The Chancell Exchequer said that the Government had be prove the strength of their case and would have in the Community. Why has not the Minist persuade our European colleagues as the Chan Exchequer did? It is not good enough merel trade lunches and be offensive to our neighbo not the way to persuade them to vote for us. W the Government considered seriously the entitlement guarantee proposal? That system farmers a guaranteed price for a set amount of It is a mechanism in which deficiency paymen used yet again. The amount to be subsidise limited and, therefore, the price could be contai way food prices could be brought much near levels.

Why does the Minister—I use Sir Simon phrase—hit the roof every time the NFU s supply side management of agricultural su Opposition recognise the weakness of the app its dangers of ossification and rigidity, but NFU has produced some positive ideas and is c to the debate. At the same time the Governmen negative and content with only a damage

exercise. By following that line the Government are selling the country short. They are doing farmers a disservice in the long term and costing consumers dear.

The Labour party believes that farmers need to be supported financially. We believe, as does the Minister, I think, in a thriving countryside. We consider that that can be achieved only by having farmers living and working in it. Without farmers the countryside would not be as we like it or as we see it today. To achieve those objectives we must move away from a purely market-supported agricultural system. The Opposition have put forward proposals for the payment of a green premium to farmers who are prepared to do their work in an environmentally friendly and positive manner. That means that we would start the process of decoupling public subsidy from production.

I was delighted to see our views endorsed, in effect, earlier this month by an authoritative report commissioned by the much-respected World Wide Fund for Nature and the Council for the Protection of Rural England. The report supports the main thrust of the Opposition's case that cutting prices paid to farmers would lead to environmental degradation, even more farm bankruptcy and rural depopulation. The report's conclusions are basically the same as ours. A section of the report states:

"The budgetary cost is large and set to rise; the benefits to farmers are at the expense of consumers and taxpayers; price support, the chief instrument of the Common Agricultural Policy, is an inefficient way of supporting farm incomes; and current policy instruments frequently encourage and exacerbate those aspects of farming which damage the environment."

We agree with those conclusions. The Government should be arguing for a policy reform along those environmental lines.

We do not believe that food production should be rewarded by the market alone, although I cannot help a wry smile when I hear the Minister talk about that. What does he mean by the market? Does he mean the free market or the largely subsidised market? I think that he means the subsidised market. We cannot argue that we should leave it to the free market; the whole system would fall apart.

Public support for farmers should be focused on the environmental factors that the market cannot meet. A Labour Government would develop an environmentally based system of payments to farmers that would be integrated into wider agricultural policies. There would have to be a transitional period, and there would have to be payment for production during that time. Specific arguments might be made for farmers who wish to switch towards more benign methods of food and animal production, or who produce healthier food. Such a scheme would have to be phased in, but we could start by extending the environmentally sensitive area concept that has worked so well and has received support from both sides of the House. Such a scheme has been shown by the CPRE, the World Wide Fund for Nature and the Countryside Commission to be a much cheaper system of supporting farmers than the current one. As the hon. Member for Sherwood again pointed out, only £4 out of £10 goes to the farmers. The current system is inefficient.

The Uruguay round provides the opportunity for reform, and it must succeed. It is inevitable that subsidies to support agriculture will be reduced, so we must try to achieve reform. It is necessary to support farming on the grounds of both food production and the environment. We are pressing for a sensible reform of the CAP which would enable us to reduce the amount of public subsidy for farmers while not reducing the actual amounts that they receive. By that means, we can achieve an agreement on GATT that will benefit the service, manufacturing, and other industries which make up 97 per cent. of the gross domestic product of the European Community.

10.52 am

Mr. Jerry Wiggin (Weston-super-Mare): The crucial subject of the GATT round, with particular reference to agriculture, appears to have come to our attention somewhat late. We, as interested Members of Parliament, should have been briefed about and had our attention drawn to the importance of the subject many months ago. The National Farmers Union, which has been rightly concerned about the immediate profitability of agriculture, has lamentably failed its membership in this matter. I am sorry to be critical of that organisation, but it is reasonable to say that if the GATT round were to fail as a result of the obduracy of the European farmers and, for that matter, the American trade negotiators—I suspect that both groups need their heads knocking together—agriculture will be held to be responsible for a serious reduction in world trade. I have heard that $3 trillion is at stake in the GATT round.

I am no great expert on trade matters, but on such an occasion it would be wrong not to declare an interest. All the outside interests that I declare in the Register of Members' Interests will be affected, in some way or another, by the outcome of the GATT negotiations. I suspect that all hon. Members with outside interests will be in the same boat.

To say to our beleaguered farmers that they must take a cut in support is a serious political proposition. I listened with some care to the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark), but I must admit that I should not know what to say to my hon. Friend the Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart) about the planning of his farm. The Opposition spokesman left him in no doubt that on the one hand the CAP should be abolished, while on the other it should be reformed—and at the same time my hon. Friend must grow environmentally suitable crops, whatever they may be. We have not yet been told.

There has been a chronic decline in farming profitability. Since 1977, farm gate prices have risen by only 60 per cent., compared with a rise in the retail prices index of 150 per cent. Real farming income has fallen by an average annual rate of 2·4 per cent. since 1979. High interest rates and inflation, the premium on vacant land, persistent green pound short-changing and poor marketing power against the supermarket giants have all contributed to that decline. One-off factors, such as the food scares that affect consumer confidence, new competition from eastern Europe, disruptions in the French lamb market, the drought and the Gulf crisis have all added to the woes of our farmers.

The Select Committee on Agriculture, which I chair, has just visited the United States of America and Canada, and their farmers are in no better a position. Canadian farmers have suffered a drop of 50 per cent. during the past two years in the real price of their products. We have considerable sympathy for world agriculture. The Cairns group has a clear and specific objective, which must be understood in the context of the geography of the world.

[Mr. Jerry Wiggin]

The fact remains that wheat can be grown in Canada and Australia far more cheaply than it can be grown in northern Europe. Beef can be produced in Australia and the Argentine more cheaply than it can in northern Europe. In fact, almost every basic commodity can be grown more cheaply outside this country, and then imported, than it can be grown in Britain.

The only alternative for Governments is to find a way to support the farming industry—that is, if we believe that it is important to have that industry. I find it extraordinary that, yet again, I am having to argue that we must support our agriculture. We have been on the brink of starvation twice this century. It is somewhat righteous to argue that that cannot happen again, because until the events in Iraq apparently there was no necessity for armed forces. Hon. Members should just think about the size of the Army that we have sent to the Gulf. I do not believe that, for strategic reasons, we should be wise to allow our agriculture to move into a state of total decline.

We must take into account the social aspects of the CAP—a policy that I have always thought to be more social than agricultural. It was designed to keep prosperity and people in the countryside, whether they be the hill farmers of Scotland or the olive growers of southern Italy. Without assistance, the countryside of Europe will collapse from one end to the other.

Mr. Cryer: The hon. Gentleman made valid arguments about keeping jobs in agricultural areas. Does he agree that the same arguments apply to textile areas? Is not it important, for social as well as for economic reasons, to keep the textile industry buoyant and developing?

Mr. Wiggin: The hon. Gentleman has pre-empted a point that I had intended to make. The multi-fibre arrangement is extremely costly; it constituents at a vast cost. We have to deci provide such support, or whether we do no party cannot support the multi-fibre arr oppose the CAP. That would be illogical. both, that is a different matter.

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, Nort hon. Gentleman answers the point raise Friend the Member for Bradford, South (M he also comment on the balance betwee agriculture and agricultural workers and the to those who work in the textile and other not it true that currently more than half the agriculture, with only a small percentage industries?

Mr. Wiggin: I am happy to reorder my deal now with that aspect.

The National Consumer Council issued that the average increase in retail prices as multi-fibre arrangement is 5 per cent. Th lower-paid in particular, because cheaper very often those that they purchase. One of imports more than £400 million a year o abroad, and that cost is translated to abo worker in the hon. Gentleman's constituen

Mrs. Elizabeth Peacock (Batley and Sp hon. Friend agree that there is no use telli living in any textile area that she may enjoy the cost of the items that she must buy for husband if they have both lost their jobs?

It being Eleven o'clock, MR. SPEAKER *proceedings, pursuant to Standing Order N sittings).*

Fishing Vessel (Sinking)

11 am

Mrs. Ray Michie (Argyll and Bute) *(by private notice)*: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the sinking of the fishing vessel Antares from Carradale, with the tragic loss of four lives, following an incident involving one of Her Majesty's submarines.

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Archie Hamilton): At approximately 02.40 yesterday morning, the Royal Navy submarine HMS Trenchant reported that whilst operating submerged in the Clyde area, certain unexplained sounds on her starboard side led her commanding officer to believe that she might have snagged the gear of a fishing vessel. The submarine therefore surfaced and conducted a visual search of the area, sighting two fishing vessels some 3,500 yds astern. The crew recovered a length of trawl cable from the casing and, believing that she may have snagged the gear of one of the vessels sighted, attempted to make contact on VHF radio. The fishing vessels did not reply.

The Royal Navy then advised the coastguard, who also tried to make contact with fishing vessels in the area, but without success. The submarine remained on the surface for some two and a half hours in good visibility and, as it appeared that the fishing vessels were in no difficulty and that there were no other untoward signs, she continued her operations before returning to Faslane.

Following the call from the Navy, the coastguard initiated inquiries in an attempt to account for all vessels that may have been in the area. During the course of the morning, it was established that the fishing vessel Antares, a 16 m pelagic trawler from Carradale, with a crew of four, was unaccounted for. A search and rescue operation was initiated immediately, and I can now report that the Antares was discovered on the sea bed at 03.40 this morning in the area in which Trenchant reported the previous night's incident.

The search for the crew continues but, sadly, it now seems extremely unlikely that they will be found alive. This is of course a tragic loss for the small community of Carradale, and I know that the whole House would wish to join me in expressing the deepest condolences to the families of the four men. The crew of Trenchant and the entire submarine community are also, I know, shocked and deeply saddened.

The Department of Transport will of course be conducting a full inquiry into the incident, as will the Royal Navy, and I would not wish to speculate on the outcomes at this stage. Royal Navy submarines have been operating in the Clyde area for more than 80 years, with an excellent safety record. Fishing vessels are almost always present in the areas where our boats operate, and submariners are accustomed to maintaining a constant and careful watch for them. I believe that our record and our safety procedures are excellent, but we will of course look carefully at the results of both inquiries to see what lessons can be learned from this tragic accident.

Mrs. Mitchie: I am grateful to the Minister for expressing his sympathies, in which I know the whole House shares, to the wives and families of the crew members who have been lost. The shock and sorrow is very real in Campbeltown, and particularly in the small tightly-knit community of Carradale, where the boat came from.

I welcome the announcement that there will be a full and extensive inquiry, and I hope that we will receive an early report. Meanwhile, will the Minister suspend submarine operations in the firth of Clyde, because this is not the first such incident? Will the Minister acknowledge that I and other Members of Parliament representing constituencies in the firth of Clyde area have repeatedly asked the Ministry of Defence to devise a solution to the danger that the accident highlights? There are various options for allowing submarines to identify fishing gear which often swings a considerable distance away from the position of the fishing vessel itself. I have myself discussed the matter at length with Navy personnel, and they have worthwhile ideas on how to overcome that problem.

Will the Minister explain why the rescue services were not alerted earlier? Finally, it would help the bereaved families enormously in their sorrow if the Navy were able to refloat the wreck, which I believe is lying in 80 fathoms of water, so that the bodies of its crew members can be recovered.

Mr. Hamilton: I am grateful to the hon. Member. My right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, who is in his place, will report this exchange also to our noble Friend the Minister of State in another place.

We shall make every attempt to produce an early report on the incident. Delay is in nobody's interest, and we will ensure that that report is produced as soon as possible.

It would be extremely difficult to suspend Royal Navy operations meanwhile, as that would inhibit extensively the Royal Navy. The hon. Lady said that this is not the first such incident. That may be so, but in the 10 incidents involving the Royal Navy and the two involving the US navy since 1979, there was no loss of life, although two yachts were sunk in the Clyde area. The incident that I have reported is most tragic, but it seems to have been a freak accident.

The hon. Lady asked what can be done. We are reviewing the question of attaching bleepers to nets. The Ministry is sponsoring research by the Admiralty research establishment. Trials have already been undertaken, and more will be commissioned. The results so far have given us cause to be very pleased. That innovation could make a massive difference. At present, a submarine can only listen to a fishing vessel's engine noise. If bleepers are fitted to the cables themselves, that will make a major difference to safety. We will place all the emphasis that we can on continuing research into that aspect from here on.

We certainly have plans to recover the wreck. Recovery vessels will shortly be dispatched, and we hope to discover more about what happened when the wreck is brought to the surface.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): My hon. Friend will appreciate that everyone in Scotland is saddened by the incident. The submariners themselves, as well as fishermen, are deeply concerned, because they too are at risk from anything that can snag their equipment when they are operating below the surface. The inquiry should bear in mind not only the submariners' operational needs, which are paramount, but their safety.

Mr. Hamilton: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. I repeat: the submarine community is equally distressed, because submariners spend a great deal of time with fishermen during their training, and they regard it as a matter of professionalism to ensure that they do not become involved in such accidents. That matters very much to the submariners, and I know that they are deeply concerned and upset that the accident should have happened.

Mr. John D. Taylor (Strangford): Campbeltown is only miles from Northern Ireland. Northern Ireland's fishing industry has a close working relationship with fishermen on the west coast of Scotland. On behalf of the Ulster Unionist party and our fishing industry in County Down, I extend sympathy to the families in Campbeltown who have been so sadly bereaved and to the whole fishing community there.

Will the Minister acknowledge that what has happened was forewarned? It was inevitable, as fishermen have been saying for several years. It was a tragedy, and it should not be dealt with lightly. It requires not only a specific inquiry into what happened in the firth of Clyde but a wider inquiry into the operation of submarines of the Royal Navy and the United States off the west coast of Scotland and right down the Irish sea.

The fishing industries of Northern Ireland, Scotland, the Isle of Man and the Republic of Ireland—for which, oddly enough, I can speak today—are concerned about the number of incidents involving submarines, of the deaths and losses that have occurred and of the increasing threat in the sea which is attacking all our fleets. I therefore ask the Minister to widen the terms of the inquiry to the operation of submarines in the Irish sea and the firth of Clyde and to report on how there can be better co-ordination between fishing fleets and the submarines of various nations.

Mr. Hamilton: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for the sympathy that he sends the families, and I know that his views will be echoed by everybody in the House.

There have not been many incidents. It has been implied that submarines were involved in accidents with fishing vessels, but on investigation a number of those accidents were found to have occurred in water that was too shallow for submarines to operate in. We must be careful before attributing to submarines every accident that happens to fishing vesseles in coastal waters around Scotland or Northern Ireland, because that is not the case.

We shall see what lessons can be learned from the inquiry and what can be done to improve our procedures. We must be careful not to rush into saying that this has implications for all submarine activities. We must press on to make the position of fishing vessels safer. I have high hopes for the bleepers that can be fitted to nets.

Mr. Peter Viggers (Gosport): We all sympathise in this most tragic incident and express sympathy for the bereaved.

As the Defence Minister answering this private notice question, my hon. Friend will confirm that the Royal Navy carries out the most scrupulous checks in surfacing and submerging and that, if necessary, he will tighten anything that needs to be done by the Royal Navy.

Does he agree that it would be wrong for the inquiry to concentrate only on the Royal Navy's procedures, because the procedures of fishing boats m investigation? For instance, the procedure may need to be improved. Will he confirm will consider the procedures of not only but fishing boats?

Mr. Hamilton: Yes. I should like to co will be two inquiries. The Departmen inquiry will carefully consider the impl fishing industry, and the internal inqui Navy will be more concerned about wh responses were made in the submarine and occurred.

The Royal Navy's submarines operat standards. The reaction of Trenchant, though it may have been, was as the Ro have required: she surfaced and looked ar see whether anything could be done. It fishing vessel concerned had sunk so quic not visible on the surface.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): submarine's detection equipment hav advance how many vessels should have b When it surfaced, it would have been abs a vessel was missing. Therefore, will the M much time elapsed between the first a incident and the first contact with the res

On the point made by the hon. Membe Bute (Mrs. Michie) about the temporar activities—we all understood the long-te suspension—is not the submarine such a equipment that, in the present internatio difficult to conceive that temporary su cause any hardship?

Mr. Hamilton: I do not think that w view, because it is important that our s training for an emergency. We would be suspending their activities. We must be defence interests of keeping our crews pr

The right hon. Gentleman said that should have known how many fishing ve area. That is the question that arises, but toi the board of inquiry. Submarines are r for engine noise and, as a result of being a up, to avoid fishing vessels. The inqui consider that point and why the subm responsible for snagging the nets, had n fishing vessel earlier.

Mr. Williams: And the time lapse?

Mr. Hamilton: I am afraid that I do answer to that, but I shall write to Gentleman.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Wi confirm that this is another incident in catastrophes that have characterised this the past 11 years? People will ask, if the M bleepers can be used to assist in operation such incidents from taking place, why it proceed with operations until bleepers Secondly, if there have been other incident boats and perhaps others, surely bleepers s fitted before now?

Mr. Hamilton: The whole business of bleepers arose on an earlier incident, and we have been pressing ahead to develop them in the light of that.

The hon. Gentleman said that this is a catalogue of disasters, but it is not. There has been no evidence——

Mr. Skinner: It goes right across Departments.

Mr. Hamilton: This is hardly the time to discuss broader aspects of Government policy, and I do not think that this is the right context in which to do so. No loss of life has been associated with Royal Navy submarines prior to this, but we have pressed on with the development of bleepers, which offer an answer for the future.

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): May I first express sympathy to the bereaved and identify with the great sadness which yesterday descended on Kintyre? The Rev. Alistair Dunlop of Saddell and Carradale parish church said:

"Some tragedies can never be prevented, but this kind can. If it's a freak wave you can do nothing. If it is a submarine, you can."

Will the Minister recognise that fishermen working in waters off the west coast of Scotland and in the Irish sea have for too long had to live with this unnatural threat to their lives, on top of all the other dangers that they daily confront? Will the Ministry of Defence finally abandon denials and silences in order to recognise, and thus deal with, the persistent scale of this problem?

Will the Minister confirm that technology exists which has been researched in this country for submarines to recognise and thus avoid fishing nets? Will he confirm, in particular, that the Net Nav system, which has been developed by a firm called Sea Metrics, was discounted in March by the Department of Transport, presumably after discussion with the Ministry, on grounds of complexity and cost? As we mourn the loss of the Antares, does he agree that neither of those grounds appears adequate today?

Will the Minister accept the view of the secretary of the Clyde Fishermen's Association, with whom I spoke this morning, that the search for a solution has been retarded by the Ministry of Defence's refusal to admit responsibility for the problem—an attitude which, I regret to say, he appears to be perpetuating this morning by discounting the possibility of naval involvement in previous, as yet unexplained, incidents?

On the specific events of yesterday morning, will the Minister inquire closely into the response of the submarine Trenchant after its master became aware that something had indeed been struck? What breakdown in communications prevented the true fate of the Antares from being revealed during that crucial period? Why was it not recognised that where previously there were three fishing boats, only two were visible to her?

Will the Minister reconsider his response this morning and give an immediate undertaking, out of sympathy and understanding for the fishing families in the area and along that coast, to divert submarines away from recognised areas of fishing activity until measures can be introduced to safeguard against such tragedies? Never again must fishermen working in flat calm, diligently pursuing their livelihood in coastal waters, lose their lives in such circumstances.

Mr. Hamiltton: The hon. Gentleman suggests that we should abandon our policy of denial. I stand here in the House making a statement precisely spelling out what happened but denying nothing whatever. The hon. Gentleman's comment was inopportune. On admitting responsibility, it must be for the board of inquiry to conclude who was responsible for the incident. I have outlined all the details of the case as I know them. In those curcumstances, we can reach our own conclusions, but it is impossible to say that it was definitely the responsibility of the submarine, because we do not know what findings the board of inquiry will make.

The hon. Gentleman asked whether we intended to admit to previous unexplained incidents. If we take that logic through to its conclusion, the Royal Navy would have to take responsibility for any fishing vessel which for some reason or other happened to be involved in a tragedy and sank, simply because no one else could be found responsible. That would be nonsense. We have gone into the most incredible detail in examining where our submarines were operating, whenever incidents took place in the past. If there was a submarine in the area, we have admitted it. But in some of the cases that we investigated, people accused submarines of sinking fishing vessels in waters which were too shallow for submarines to operate in.

We shall not admit liability for every fishing vessel that gets into trouble. I am afraid that there are cases in which fishing vessels go down with no explanation whatever. Such cases are great tragedies, but we cannot expect the Royal Navy to take responsibility simply because no other outcome can be found.

The hon. Gentleman said that, previously, there were three fishing vessels in the area and then only two could be found. I gather that such fishing vessels do not necessarily keep in contact with their colleagues in other boats. Fishing vessels can go down without people being aware of it. We reported back as soon as we possibly could. A search was carried out and the wreck has been found.

I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for the sympathy that he expressed for the families. We all share that sympathy in the House today.

General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade

Question again proposed, That this House do now adjourn.

11.22 am

Mr. Wiggin: I was being drawn by the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) on the multi-fibre arrangement. I misled him. I have had an opportunity to check my figures. The Silberston report estimated that the MFA costs United Kingdom consumers £980 million a year and that the cost of each job saved works out at about £29,700, which is three or four times the average earnings in the two industries. It would not be profitable for us to have a quid pro quo argument about it. If one has textile workers, one supports the common agricultural policy as long as one keeps in line on the MFA. There are similar arguments about the CAP and the MFA and about whether one should give a sector of industry special support.

I defend the CAP on the ground that it is not as costly or damaging as its critics would have the world believe. My right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food spelt out that to compare current world prices with the price that the consumer pays is a wholly artificial exercise. I am sorry that farmers have not been swifter to make capital out of the accusations. Instead they have allowed them to become established as folklore.

Sugar has been mentioned. I work for British Sugar plc. We produce only half the sugar that we eat in Britain. We could produce it all, but we have various arrangements that involve supporting third-world countries. Some 5 per cent. of world sugar is traded on the world market and it is cheap. The Americans are in the forefront of protecting their sugar growers. They are an absolute model of protecting a sector of industry. I do not hear too much about them volunteering to undo those arrangements.

In my travels I have heard almost unanimous complaints from countries outside Europe about export restitutions. I have visited New Zealand on several occasions and I keep in close touch with its representatives. Only yesterday we were discussing its difficulty in operating on a world market with wholly unsubsidised agriculture. Perhaps I should remind the hon. Member for South Shields what happened to the Government who swept away subsidies in New Zealand. They were swept out of office. New Zealand's representatives rightly say that it is unfair for them to sell their butter on a world market subsidised by the taxpayers of Europe. They struggle to operate in that environment. I have some sympathy with that.

I did not get an answer from the hon. Member for South Shields on the problem of what should be done about surpluses. The National Farmers Union is technically correct to talk about supply management. I prefer to call it quotas because it is a simpler and more easily understood phrase. Quotas have worked for years for milk and sugar and previously worked well for hops. A quota system could be introduced for many commodities. I am sorry that the NFU did not subscribe to that view many years ago. It has come round to it only recently—so recently as to be disruptive in the negotiations that my right hon. Friend the Minister seeks to hold. If we could all agree that the problem of surpluses, not the concept of the CAP itself, causes difficulty, we could make progress.

The food industry has been incredibly slow to remind us how important export restitutions are to that industry. It happens to be a fairly strong element of our export contribution. Confectionery and biscuits are a particularly strong element. The proportion of the value of those goods represented by export restitutions has been demonstrated to be considerable. We must be cautious. I share the view of my right hon. Friend the Minister that our Community partners will not lightly change their political attitude at this stage.

I am reminded that 100 years ago the political debate was very much about protectionism. Indeed, the modern Conservative party, founded by Chamberlain, my great-grandfather and his friends in Birmingham in the late 19th century, was founded on the basis of protecting our manufacturing industry. In those days we were a protectionist party. As circumstances have changed and because we manufacture less, it has become in our interest to take a wholly different view.

I am persuaded by many of the arguments that a successful conclusion of the GATT round will be very much in the interest of not only Britain but all trading nations, especially third-world countries, which currently suffer such deleterious effects from constraints not only on fibres and food but on many other products where there are restrictive practices—none so severe as those of the Japanese and the Americans.

With considerable cheek, the Americans have asked for a huge reduction in subsidies when they are perfectly well aware of the political problems that we shall face even in achieving a 30 per cent. reduction in support prices. The Canadians take the rather more sensible view that it should be 55 per cent. We must bear it in mind that Canada currently subsidises transport and milk and plenty of other goods and services. Once one assists one part of agriculture, there is a knock-on effect on the rest of the industry.

Agriculture is our core industry. Historically it has always been disastrous to allow agriculture to sink into too poor an economic condition because shortly other industries follow. We must remember the lessons of history. One is that it is sensible and wholly in the national interest to maintain a viable and prosperous countryside and farming community.

11.29 am

Mr. Ted Garrett (Wallsend): Both opening spokesmen employed some competent arguments, but I disagreed with one statement which they both made. They said that farmers were there to protect the interests of the countryside. We should not let that assumption go unchallenged. In East Anglia there has been vandalism. In the counties in the north, dry walls are left crumbling. Everywhere we see tractor damage to our public highways and pollution of our rivers and streams by the farming industry. So that statement must be qualified.

I have always had an interest in agriculture, although admittedly somewhat low key. Older hon. Members will remember that the first Select Committee on Agriculture was created by the Labour Government under Harold Wilson. I served on that Committee with some Tory Members, and it was an exciting one. It is a matter of history now that the Labour Government abolished the first three Select Committees on Agriculture, on Science and Technology and on Education and Science—because

we had the audacity to ask to go to Brussels to view agriculture abroad. George Brown, then Foreign Secretary, assisted in their abolition. It was left to the incoming Conservative Government rightly to reinstitute Select Committees, which are now firmly established.

I am sorry that the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has left the Chamber. I have some sympathy with his case. For the past 12 years I have been a member of the Council of Europe and I serve on its agriculture committee. It is the most difficult thing in the world to get the committee to agree on any report. It is the most conservative organisation that it has ever been my misfortune to serve on. I understand the problem. I see politicians from Germany, France, Austria, the Baltic states and the Iberian peninsula. We deliberate and argue, but once it comes to making a decision to improve the agricultural interests of Europe, they will not support it. We all know that it would be political suicide for them to do so. Unless we can find a way round that, our Minister, of whichever party, faces insufferable difficulties. The same problem translates into the European Economic Community.

I tremble at the prospect of the failure of the general agreement on tariffs and trade round. It would be disastrous for Britain and for all those who work in our different businesses. If the Uruguay round fails we can only expect our growth prospects to diminish. I am lucky that the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry is present for my speech, I hope that he may reply to it favourably.

It is an elementary fact that as a nation we must depend on exports, and now more than ever. As an island nation we depend more than most countries on openness and the freedom to sell goods and services. Those are simple economic premises. The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food was right that the current GATT round is in crisis. it has major problems to tackle, not least in agriculture. There are vested interests in agriculture which are concerned to ensure not that more jobs are created but that the rotten status quo is maintained.

I do not want to spend valuable time going over old ground. I want to draw attention to what is at stake in this Uruguay round. The United Kingdom is a world leader in many areas, particularly in services. Services is an umbrella word which covers sectors as diverse as telecommunications, insurance, computing and banking. They are growth areas in which we as a nation can take a lead. Agriculture pales into insignificance compared with the service sector.

In the EEC, agriculture accounts for only 3 per cent. of gross domestic product. In this country services account for more than 50 per cent. In the United Kingdom, banking, insurance and finance account for 12 per cent. of our total work force. Services are important to our future interests. At a time when eastern Europe is opening up, British businesses have wonderful opportunities to sell their services, technology, electronics and engineering and civil engineering expertise. If we can put those aspects of our society in the front line, we shall do the nation a great service. I wish the Secretary of State well in his new job. He has tremendous responsibility. I urge him to give priority to those matters in his work at the Department.

It would be criminal if the EEC stumbled over agriculture and sacrificed all the other business interests that are at stake.

Mr. Cryer: Does my hon. Friend agree that it would be terrible if the interests of the textile industry were ignored because, as a Conservative Member said today, we shall somehow save money if we import clothing and textiles from countries which have child labour, no health and safety at work legislation, no trade union rights and no limitation on the hours worked? Does he agree that if we imported clothing and textiles produced through massive exploitation, therefore at low cost, it would be unfair to the decent standards of our industry?

Mr. Garrett: I wholly agree with that statement.

I am not alone in expressing some of these views. This is one area where I wholly agree with the Prime Minister. Some weeks ago when I asked a parliamentary question I was in the unique position of receiving frowns from my hon. Friends and praise from some others for my views. Hon. Members who were in the House that day will recall that most of those who congratulated me were Tory Members. When I think about the Prime Minister's position today and about that time, I feel a certain sadness.

As I said, we must not allow agriculture to hamper the development of business. I recognise that we need good GATT rules. If we do nothing else, we must send a strong message to the negotiators. The people who slog behind the scenes and spend interminable hours in committees are good negotiators. They must be made to realise that our national long-term well-being is at stake, and the House should support their efforts.

11.39 am

Mr. Paul Channon (Southend, West): I agree with much of what the hon. Member for Wallsend (Mr. Garrett) said, particularly his remarks about the importance of the trade in services. The new GATT round provides the opportunity to make a breakthrough, although perhaps we shall hear more about whether it will succeed. Such a breakthrough would be of immeasurable benefit to the United Kingdom and many other countries.

The GATT round discussions about which we have been talking are largely about agriculture, but that is not the only item on the agenda. Textiles, about which the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) speaks, are not the only other issue on the agenda. I have noticed in trade debates over the years that hon. Members whose constituents have a vital interest in these matters contribute, but hon. Members do not usually speak from a more generous point of view and talk about the GATT round as a whole. I want to address myself to that aspect.

It is essential that the GATT round should succeed. If it does not, long-term trading prospects will be in danger. I should like to put a specific point to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. My right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food made an encouraging speech. I did not get the impression from him that the GATT talks were likely to fail. However, every time I open a newspaper, I read that the GATT round is in a state of crisis.

I wonder whether my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will tell us how he views the prospects. Is there to be an agreement in December? Is this agreement wishful thinking, or is there still a real chance? Are efforts being made to postpone the date, if necessary? What is so magic about 3 to 8 December? It is far more important to reach a solution than to stick arbitrarily to a date by which the

[Mr. Paul Channon]

GATT round is meant to end. I am all for keeping that date as a discipline, if that is what is being done, but I hope that, if necessary, the talks will be extended.

There is concern that the fast-track approach of the United States Congress may end. I suspect that, if Congress debates these issues in detail while they are being negotiated rather than having a fast-track approach, the GATT round would be in grave difficulties. As I understand it, the fast-track approach does not expire until March. It would be helpful if my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State would estimate the likely prospects of success and the dates involved. I, too, wish my right hon. Friend extremely well in his task, particularly in these negotiations.

The House is probably aware that, if the talks fail, there is a great danger that, over the next few years, protectionism will grow strongly in the United States of America. Protectionism is already strong enough in Japan, although the situation may be better than it was in the past. Anyone who has negotiated for a long period, as I have, on such tricky issues as whisky and entry to the stock exchange—I am glad to say that the position on both is much better now—will know just how protectionist the Japanese are. We all know from our study of history just how protectionist the United States can be, and frequently has been in the past.

Let us be under no illusions—given half a chance, the European Community would go protectionist. One of the British Government's major achievements over the years has been the fact that we have managed to keep the Community on a free trading basis, with the support of the northern countries and often without the support of the southern countries. I believe that, given half a chance, the French and Italians would wish to see a fortress Europe and much more protection. That would be a great mistake for us and Europe, and it would be disastrous for the Third world. It would be a disaster politically as well. I urge my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to use his influence in the Community to persuade it to do a deal, even if it is not perfect. It is better to have an imperfect deal than no deal.

When I went with the then Minister for Trade—my hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Sutton (Mr. Clark)—to Punta del Este for the negotiations, we aimed to get a successful round going and to defend our vital interests, and we did that. We also wanted to make progress on services and on intellectual property. It was difficult to define "services". I do not think that at that time anyone was precise about exactly how many services could be included in the GATT round, how many it was practical to imagine or about the timetable. In principle, there should be fair trade in not only goods but services.

In those days, the United States was fanatically keen on free trade in services and on including them in the GATT round, but I now read that it is much less keen. I should be grateful if my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State would spare a few moments to tell us about negotiations on services. We are entitled to argue our corner.

As the hon. Member for Wallsend pointed out, this could be good for the United Kingdom in terms of banking and insurance. The House should be under no illusion that banking and insurance do well throughout the world already, although they could do better. Often, the most difficult place for them to do well is the Europea Community, where so many protectionist measures sti exist. Look at the scandal of shipping in the Europea Community. It is ridiculous that, although there are fr seas around Britain, it is impossible for us to get cabota or make progress on shipping negotiations in th Community. The negotiations on aviation are muc better, but they are not improving sufficiently fast. W must convince not only the developing world but th Community.

I shall not enter into the detailed discussion o agriculture which we have had this morning. When w were negotiating this round, we had immense difficulty getting Community agreement, but in those days only th French held out. The French Agriculture Minister flew Uruguay to put some backbone into the Frenc negotiators, and it was only with great difficulty that w managed to have an agreed Community line. It is a gre pity that the Germans have joined the side of those wh argue for more protection.

Of course there must be transition. Of course the righ of farmers must be protected. Of course we cannot ha our countryside laid waste. Luckily, most of my farmi friends seem to have left the Chamber for the moment, b I must say that I share the doubts of those who do not li the common agricultural policy. It needs major refor even if we do not go as far as abolition.

No doubt we shall soon hear about textiles from t hon. Member for Bradford, South—good luck to him a to any of my hon. Friends who want to speak abo textiles. But they must face the fact that there has be protection for textiles for about 16 years under the MF That must be phased out. Of course, it must be done in way that does not do grave damage to the textile a clothing industries, but I believe that that can be doi There is not necessarily great disagreement between us that point.

In any case, am I not right in saying that the penetrati of our market by foreign textile and clothing industr comes much more from developed countries than from t countries with whom we have the MFA? The Frenc Italians and Portuguese penetrate markets.

I am sure that the spokesmen for the textile a clothing industries—not the hon. Member for Bradfo South—often exaggerate the effect that gradual wi drawal of the MFA would have on those industries. time goes by, our real competition will be from the mu more up-market industries of the European Communi Hong Kong and a few other areas. Be that as it may hope that a deal will be struck that will not fatally wou our textile and clothing industries or agriculture but w allow us to make some progress.

Not surprisingly, GATT must be seen as a package must be acceptable to developed and developing countr alike. Everyone must gain from it; otherwise, why on ea should people sign up to it? We must gain from it. T developing world, including the Americans and Japanese, must gain, for unless every country has so benefit from the GATT round, they will have no inter in reaching a satisfactory conclusion.

Mr. Corbyn: The GATT negotiations are not fi While the discussions are portrayed as a battle between United States and western Europe, in reality the peo who are losing out worst on the food and farm product side are Third-world producers, who are not in a posit

to negotiate against dumping because of the debt crisis and the economic power that the United States uses against them.

Mr. Channon: There must be some benefit for the developing countries from GATT; otherwise, they will not agree. Indeed, they were suspicious from the start. But with the increased access of their goods into the developed world, there should be something in it for the developing world as well. If that does not happen, it is unlikely that the round will succeed. There must be something in the package to make the developing countries feel that they too are benefiting. That is likely to happen, due to better access for their goods in the developed world, and no doubt there will be other benefits as well.

Will the Minister give a realistic assessment of what is going on in the negotiations? I am sure we are unanimous in believing that, if the talks fail, that could in the long term lead to disaster for Britain, which exports more of its GDP than many other countries, and for the other countries. I urge the Government to press for a solution, if necessary an imperfect one. Nothing would be worse than a final breakdown, with the world breaking up into bilateralism or great trading blocs, with protectionism returning. That would damage the interests of developed and developing countries alike.

11.51 am

Mr. Richard Livsey (Brecon and Radnor): Agriculture is a vital issue in my constituency and I am an agriculturist. It is clear that, under the GATT round, we welcome the principle of the liberalisation of world trade. The free access of goods to markets and the free flow of goods and services are highly desirable aims, but I fear that the real world will make those aims difficult to achieve. In France, for example, there are few Japanese cars, and in Japan there are few British cars. Trade is distorted throughout the world and that will remain the case for many years to come. Even so, we must try to do something to remedy the situation.

The way in which such distortions impact on industry in general, and on food and farming commodities in particular, can be severe. That is particularly so in agriculture in the third world. As the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare (Mr. Wiggin) pointed out in his capacity as Chairman of the Select Committee on Agriculture, the effect on agriculture in the United Kingdom can be equally severe. It is easy to say that the CAP has many faults and should be scrapped. I would not say that. The CAP has been a great success to the agricultural communities. The policy has faults and must be reformed, but it has led to the success of rural areas.

The trouble is that we all want to play on a level playing field. We discuss world prices, but in reality there are none, because such prices are distorted by subsidies. It is impossible in agricultural terms to discuss real world prices, for not only can we not define such prices but they do not exist because of the hidden subsidies that distort them.

Any negotiations concerning agriculture are made difficult because, for the last 40 to 45 years, most developed western countries have had intricate agricultural support systems. We have had the Agriculture Act 1947, United States legislation since 1948 has supported that nation's agricultural community, and the 1960s saw the creation of the CAP, all aiming to support agriculture and rural communities.

The present negotiations are bound to be difficult when, for example, we have the United States speaking with a forked tongue in requiring a 75 per cent. reduction on the GATT round, yet Congress has not even discussed the matter. It is doubtful whether Congress would support such a radical proposal, even in American terms.

The European Community proposal is for a 30 per cent. cut in agricultural support, at a time when British farmers are receiving 1980 prices for their livestock and when they have suffered a reduction of up to 25 per cent. in their incomes in the last 12 months. A proposal of that kind represents a difficult pill for them to swallow, if they can swallow it at all. In other words, we are dealing with an extremely complex matter.

The proposals put forward by the European Community in the GATT round are aimed at progressive reductions in agricultural support, and the 30 per cent. reduction would relate to the main agricultural products of the Community and deal with adjustments of export restitutions. The European Community wants recognition of the progress that has been made since 1984 in reducing agricultural support in the EC. Such progress has been successful in relation to milk quotas, extensification and the stabilisation of many products. In other words, it is inaccurate to say that the EC has not attempted at least to begin to put its house in order.

In its proposals to the GATT round, the Community states categorically that it wants support levels to be frozen on the 1988 basis. There is no question but that support prices will be reduced, with a reduction in production in Europe. One is bound to wonder whether other countries that are negotiating as part of the GATT round will make equivalent efforts. Will they implement any measures that are agreed, and will such measures be politically acceptable in their countries? For example, my reading of EC documents relating to the livestock sectors leads me to believe that we are expected to see a support price change of at least 4·7 per cent. less per annum up to 1996. That will be a large cut for the industry to sustain.

Many of my hon. Friends represent areas in which textiles and the woollen industry are of vital importance. They wish me to say that we must have a 10-year programme which guarantees equivalent access to third-country markets which at present place barriers against our products. They want to see access for textile products in those markets within that timescale. They believe that it is possible to export one's way through the present maze, so long as there is a level playing field.

We do not want the MFA to be abolished immediately. It should be phased out over, say, 10 years, and the phasing-out process must be very gradual indeed. We need fair trade as well as free trade in that respect.

Returning to the subject of agriculture, it is worrying to note the disparity that exists between the United Kingdom and the Community at large. There is no fairness in the pricing system in the Community and in Britain. For the Community, with the CAP, to negotiate on the GATT round with existing disparities, such as the green pound and the monetary compensatory amounts, represents a worrying scenario for British agriculture.

What worries me particularly is how British agriculture —and especially agriculture in Wales, which is the part of the country that I represent—will move from the present

[Mr. Richard Livsey]

disastrous price reductions that we have witnessed in the autumn of 1990 even as far as 1992, when the single market comes into being? It is not good enough for the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to say that he will accept the 30 per cent. cuts without enacting some domestic support for United Kingdom farmers who are extremely hard pressed and many of whom will go out of business.

A survey conducted by the agricultural economics department at Aberystwyth university has stated clearly that, if things go on as they are, at least 12,000 farmers will go out of business in Wales in the next three years. That will devastate the rural areas in Wales and will have a knock-on effect on the rural communities. We cannot ignore that. That is the result of the present situation, let alone of accepting the 30 per cent. GATT cuts.

We must not only have environmental payments; we must accept social responsibility for the rural areas, and especially for our family farms. Some form of income support must be introduced to ensure that our rural areas are not devastated. I agree entirely that surpluses are a major part of the problem and that they must be tackled within the context of the CAP. However, some of those resources must be switched back into support for our family farming units otherwise, as I have said, devastation will be the order of the day.

Hon. Members have talked about increasing Community surpluses. Access from the eastern European countries into the European Community is adding to surpluses in the beef sector. Why do we hear stories about the USSR facing famine this winter because of its immense problems of food production, when eastern Europe is exporting to a market that is already over-supplied? Why can we not find the money to switch that production and to pay the eastern European producers for that production in good currency? Production should be switched to Russia to save its people, literally, from starvation this winter. We must address that scenario.

There are also disparities within the Community on agricultural credit. Why can farmers in the Community have access to credit at half the rates that currently prevail in the United Kingdom—at anything from 5 to 7 per cent., compared with 15 per cent. in the United Kingdom? That is unfair competition, and it must be sorted out.

Why are our sheep farmers facing great cuts in their receipts this autumn of up to 30 per cent., but not receiving the same ewe premium payments as the farmers in the rest of the Community, at over £20 per head? I do not agree with that; I agreed with variable premiums in the past, but we must accept that the system that has been imposed within the CAP is one in which our farmers are losing a great deal.

I make a plea for time in which to adjust. We cannot have these sudden switches and changes. Farms in Wales are half the size of those in England, and farm incomes in Wales average £9,000 and less per annum, which is not a proper living wage and which does not give an adequate return on the capital invested.

We must take account of the knock-on effects on the rural communities, on the villages, shops, transport contractors and all the rest. There must be a gradual change; otherwise, I fear complete disaster for the rural areas of this country.

12.4 pm

Sir Hugh Rossi (Hornsey and Wood Green): I decline the invitation of my right hon. Friend the Mi of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to enter in discussion with him at this stage on the relatio between good farming practice and the rural environ important though that is. I wish to take up the narrower point raised by my right hon. Friend Member for Southend, West (Mr. Channon), who ref to the importance of a serious discussion of s industries at the Uruguay round.

I raise this point, which is specific and narrow, capacity as chairman of the Lords and Commons soli group. We are concerned about the issue of foreign consultant regimes. I start with the proposition that services are a critical part of international Immediate access to advice on the variety of laws an variations in laws from one country to another, a international law, are often vital to firms that are se to trade in other countries.

It is important that United Kingdom solicitors s be able to provide their services outside the U Kingdom, either by regular visits or by the establish of offices under their own professional title and n without—this is the important consideration—havi satisfy the requirements for admission to the host legal profession. Indeed, it is not necessary for them so, because they are not concerned to have access activities that are properly reserved for the host legal profession, such as access to the courts there real estate transactions. They are there to advise laws of our country and on international law, to foreign countries to trade with us more readily and

At the Geneva round, the prevailing view was th professions as a whole did not require a sectoral a that would provide special interpretation or exem from the framework principles. No doubt that is tr medicine, engineering and architecture, for which th of nature which govern the human body, or of phy mathematics, are universal, but it is not true of man laws, where there is disparity and variation betwe nation and another and where experts must be in personally in order to give the necessary advic services and to facilitate trade. That was recognised United States negotiators at Geneva, who propos annexe applying the principles that I have tri enunciate. Probably their annexe was too wi acceptance.

Therefore, I advance a possible solution, which the concept of foreign legal consultant regimes sho recognised in an annexe, with suitable definition, there is a peg upon which to hang subsequent negot on matters within the GATT framework. The element in such a definition would be along the fol lines: "'foreign legal consultant regime' means a under which foreign lawyers are permitted established in a host state to provide foreig international legal services under their own home st and firm name without having to satisfy the requir for admission to the host state legal profession". that to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of St Trade and Industry, and I urge him to raise it and t it at the Uruguay round.

12.8 pm

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North): I welcome the debate, not least because GATT and trade issues are one of the areas in which it is often difficult to get one's mind round the subject because it is so far-reaching and fundamental. It is often easier to tackle the simpler and more local questions. I have found the issues to be very complex and I put forward my comments in all humility.

I shall touch first on some of the fundamental economic consequences of the GATT round, and then on the philosophical basis of our policy towards trade—whether free trade or protected trade—which has made and unmade Governments in Britain and elsewhere. I shall also refer to the politics of subsidy. To some extent, and in some form, all the nations of the world subsidise and protect the areas that they regard as important. Finally, I shall deal with the whole question of intergovernmental co-operation, of which GATT is one example and for which I hope the new post-cold war era will offer many opportunities, not only in trade but in wider respects.

The specific consequences of GATT and the outcome of the negotiations starting on 3 December among Trade Ministers—in an attempt to find some solution in the final stage of the GATT negotiations—will have specific consequences for my area. A number of hon. Members on both sides of the House have referred to the consequences for the textile industry. I have received a number of constituency-based representations from trade unions, local authorities and employers on the consequences that will flow for the local textile industry if the multi-fibre arrangement is not renegotiated on a satisfactory basis. I know that my hon. Friends will press that further. The GATT round will also have specific consequences for the Third world, which will be penalised if we fail to secure an appropriate outcome from the negotiations. I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) will seek to discuss that further. That consequence is so evident that Mr. Barber Conable, the president of the World bank, was moved to say that the world's poor stand to lose most from the failure of GATT. I hope that all hon. Members will bear that in mind.

Let me start with the philosophy of trade. The choice between free trade and protectionism cannot always be seen in terms of black and white. There are degrees of free trade and degrees of protectionism and it is for nation states to get the best deal from international negotiations. All such negotiations are a function not of altruism or of wider human values but of the political and economic needs, and the interests of the people and nations participating. If it benefits a nation state or a trading bloc, free trade—or protected trade—will be adopted.

However, circumstances change and it may be difficult, in the short term, to change one's position because, in adopting free trade, one adopts the rhetoric of free trade and one educates and trains people to respond to the weasel words of that rhetoric. The same applies to protected trade. When economic circumstances demand that a change be made, rhetoric may obstruct the movement towards it. That is what has happened in the Uruguay round. That is why the round has been so protracted. It is also a reason why the round is in some trouble.

The most powerful seek to set the agenda according to the self-interest of nations and national trading blocs. The one exception to that may be the United Kingdom because the overlying rhetoric has been believed by our Government and our politicians. Being dogma-driven, they have not seen the necessity for subsidy in industry. We are playing by the rules laid down in our own rhetoric. We are playing cricket and everyone else is happy to allow us to do so because they are playing football in the World cup and they are playing to win.

That cannot be said to apply to the United States' negotiating stance. The United States has moved its position considerably in recent years and Carla Hills has now stated that the official position is that the United States is in favour of free competitive trade in which Michael Porter's "competitive advantage of nations" can work to its fullest extent and, it is to be hoped, to the unrestrained benefit of everyone. It is up to our negotiators to ensure that that flood of fine free market rhetoric is made reality for those participating in the GATT round.

That position is a far cry from the United States' protectionist view—above all on agriculture but also in steel, textiles and sugar—alluded to by the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare (Mr. Wiggin). I understand from today's newspapers that the United States is even going so far as almost to abolish most-favoured nation trading status. The concept is still there as a carrot to try to bring people on board in GATT, but it seems that one of the cherished weapons of the protectionist era is on its way out.

Why has that change taken place? Hon. Members on both sides of the House have referred to GATT in general, and I understand that the right hon. Member for Southend, West (Mr. Channon) talked about the subject at length. But the major driving force for the current GATT round is agriculture, and agriculture lies at the political heart of the debate. There is one simple political reason for that. In most nation states, farmers have traditionally been at the centre of the conservative electoral coalition and that fact has been most obvious in western Europe and the United States. But in the United States, that central part of the coalition has diminished in political value. In 1930, 30 per cent. of people in the United States worked on the land. The figure is now down to 3 per cent., so the electoral pay-off for over-defending the inflated incomes of highly protected farmers no longer outweighs the financial penalties incurred in that defence. That is not so in Europe. Europe has 10 million farmers who would be up in arms if the Governments of Europe accepted the demands of the United States. The Christian democratic and Conservative parties would suffer massive electoral consequences which would put the social democrats or democratic socialists in power for more than a generation.

The new Prime Minister will therefore have a difficult decision to make. I think that the pro-American stance adopted by the current Prime Minister will change and that, in future, the Government will adopt an increasingly Community-based position. That may affect the support given by the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to the current American position in the GATT round. Whoever wins the contest for the Conservative party leadership, there will certainly be changes.

Through CAP and other supports, a massive and illegitimate political tax is being levied to sustain the electoral base of a number of political parties including, historically, the Conservative party. Some Conservative Members are finally beginning to realise, in their own interests, that there is more to be gained by reducing the

[Mr. Graham Allen]

£14 per week food tax that is levied on every family in the United Kingdom than by buying off, and continuing to buy off, a shrinking farming constituency. That is why the debate about Europe will focus increasingly on the 60 per cent. of the European Community budget that is wasted on an inefficient means of supporting farmers and farm prices. No one objects to the rational, logical support of farmers and the food industry. However, 60 per cent. of that support does not go to the farmers but is used to pay for storage, transportation and other matters. That is not the best way to support our food industry.

Despite all the wind from the Secretary of State, the Government should be ashamed of their failure over 11 years seriously to make an impact on the common agricultural policy. There must be a far greater attack on the problem, whatever party is in power, over the next five or 10 years so that money may be properly spent. I am sure that all hon. Members have learnt from the European experience that there should by all means be a subsidy of one sort or another. However, initially there must be an attempt to track the real market price so that the subsidy can be effectively administered. Where there are three, four or five different layers of subsidy or protection, it is difficult to track back and discover the original market price on which to base a sensible judgment about support and subsidy.

I hope that the GATT round will be used assiduously by the relevant Ministers to ensure that real pressure is brought to bear on the common agricultural policy. The GATT round is a weapon that can be used, at least on the table if not in reality, to impose some sense on the CAP. The arguments can again be opened and won over two, three, five, or 10 years.

Either an incoming Labour Government or the present Government must address food price levels, the efficiency of farming for consumers' benefit and the political reasons why subsidy works to the benefit of conservative parties. A Labour Government must do that on the basis not of free trade, but of fair trade. Free trade can be a misnomer. It can be expensive, not least for the Third world, a matter with which my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North will deal. Some of the basic principles of fair trade can be agreed by all countries. Where support is necessary, for social reasons or for small farmers, it could be paid directly, perhaps by some form of income support. Fair trade also needs to encompass all that has been said about textile imports which can undercut domestic industry, not because of better quality but essentially because of lower wages, sometimes slave wages, child labour and poor working conditions. Such things lead to disbenefits for the producers and for our domestic economy because people may be thrown out of work.

Conservative Members have problems with the social charter of the European Community, but in a sense this is the social charter aspect of GATT. We need to look at the other side of the argument, not just at the straightforward bottom-line subsidy costs of trade agreements. We must look at the social costs which inevitably lead to the undercutting of our domestic industries.

Japan is a difficult area and the difficulties are often cultural. We should try to understand those difficulties and not merely dismiss them as restrictive practices. They need to be respected to a degree that has not so apparent. If not, they will not be understood a not be able to negotiate those practices away.

So far GATT has been quite successf examination of tariff barriers, but it has not yet t main problems of non-tariff barriers, export import protection, access barriers and price sup must make GATT work because if we fail we m accept alternatives that will be less palatab properly worked-out GATT round. For e subsidy war would be an even more expensive could see a retreat into trading blocs by Europe America and possibly the Pacific rim or even, a floated in the past couple of months, a st OECD taking on some of the trade negotiating GATT.

We must accept that, in relation to GATT have to give up some degree of national soverei is the basis of negotiation and agreement. Give a all parties, all trading states, is essential if GA made to work. However, at present GATT is n the central problem of agricultural subsidies. I t that those subsidies currently cost about $500 b of that money could certainly be better spent in to reduce overproduction, end the squeeze on world and third-world prices and assist T development.

GATT needs to be kept afloat because it is t of future intergovernmental organisations tackle world problems. GATT is failing becaus is illegitimate. It does not have the support of state parliaments and faces the problems sometimes face in the European Commission people to negotiate on matters that our Parliam had an opportunity to discuss. In many ways like a multinational company which sends dir board meeting rather than involving all the p will have to participate in taking decis illegitimacy and the undemocratic and una nature of many intergovernmental conferenc many of the problems which arise because peop participated in initial discussions. That unde basis of decisions.

It is crucial for the next Labour Governme on democratically accountable intergovern ganisations. Only then will we be able to tackl that go far beyond trade difficulties. Those prob into international debt, currency trading, the m capital round the world, assistance to democratised countries of eastern Europe, th ment and above all the Third world, not least wages. Those matters need proper enforc policing, and it will be for the next Labour G not only to conclude this GATT trading ro build on it and to extend the concept co-operation through intergovernmental orga that we may tackle some of the even bigge facing the world.

12.27 pm

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): I mus apologies in advance to my right hon. and hon. the Front Bench, because I shall be dashing of plane to Scotland.

The successful conclusion of the GATT round is critical for both Scotland's farmers and manufacturers. Scotland's splendid export achievements are at risk if restrictive trade practices and protectionist policies are implemented by individual trading blocs such as the European Community or the Cairns group.

The hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) spoke critically about the Government's policy, but he did not take into account the fact that Scotland's premier exporting industry is the Scotch whisky industry. The status of that industry in 1979, when the Government came to office, should be remembered. It was overstocked, distilleries and bottling and blending plants were being closed, and home and export sales were flagging. The situation today is vastly different. Stocks are more in balance, sales at home and abroad are buoyant, distilleries are reopening and the jobs in the bottling and blending plants are more secure.

The hon. Member for Wallsend (Mr. Garrett), in his thoughtful and constructive speech, mentioned my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. I shall also mention her, because I believe that she has been the best Prime Minister that the country has had this century. It is thanks to her policies and the determination of her Government that Scotland's premier exporting industry is in better shape. Competition, both at home and abroad, but particularly that from the European Community, has contributed to that.

Exports of Scotch whisky are £1,400 million. Well in excess of £1,000 million is paid by the industry to the Chancellor of the Exchequer. It exports at least 90 per cent. of everything that it produces outside Scotland. When I listen to some of the theoretical humbug from the Labour party, I think that it has forgotten how important are such industries. The Scotch whisky industry directly employs 14,000 people and many more thousands are employed indirectly.

I have two examples of countries operating tariff barriers that were detrimental to the Scotch whisky industry, both of which export massively to the United Kingdom and Europe. The first is Japan, where, after tough negotiations, the situation has been much improved. However, in South Korea, much improvement is still required. We shall not obtain that by erecting tariff barriers in the United Kingdom. The Scotch Whisky Act 1988, for which I can claim some responsibility, has also made a contribution to maintaining the quality and standards of our premier export.

The Scotch Whisky Association has two questions to which it would like answers. The first is: what steps have the Government taken to ensure that the EC Commission's negotiating position in the current GATT round takes account of the objective of the Scotch whisky industry and others to eliminate, or at least reduce, tariff and non-tariff barriers facing products in world markets? Secondly, are the Government aware that the United States Government's proposed "zero for zero" approach for the elimination of tariffs on distilled spirits has the full support of Community spirits producers, including the Scotch whisky industry, and will the Government take steps to ensure that the EC responds in kind? The Scotch whisky industry considers these matters to be of major significance. A reduction in tariffs, especially the "zero for zero" approach, would help exports and is the way forward.

In a debate such as this, one must mention the industry. Every farmer in Scotland recognises th is one of the major components of Scotch w healthy Scotch whisky industry is therefore Scottish barley farmers. Farming industry prob be remove[illegible]nly by realistic Community policies Government are right to demand a fair deal withi for British agriculture. They must also ensure th a fair deal in world markets.

We must never forget Scottish and British de on our manufacturing industry. We hear much so-called destruction of manufacturing industr Scotland our manufacturing industry is producin real terms than at any time, and we are exporti We want a fair deal for British industry, both w Community and outwith it. We want to see proposals put forward by the Community in th round.

We in Scotland recognise the difficulties Government face. If, by chance, the deadline da be met, we must continue with the present arra until a new regime can be put in place.

12.35 pm

Mr. Martyn Jones (Clwyd, South-West Members on both sides of the House have ackn the importance of the Uruguay round of th negotiations. It is important for industry, the Th and consumers. Restrictions on trade, whether quotas, voluntary restraints or administrative raise prices and reduce consumer choice. Pro measures often have a disproportionate effect c consumers, but not only consumers will suffer if fails. Failure of the round would be disast international relations and the British economy. protectionism and trade disputes would lead growth and reduced export earnings. There damaging consequences for employment in indu commerce.

A recent study by the Centre for Inte Economics in Canberra suggests that, if fortres becomes a reality, it will cost the Community $52 year. If the Community's protectionism was met States retaliation, the Community would lose $1 while the United States would lose $64 Protectionist measures hurt the countries that us much as their trading partners.

The Minister implied that the concessions ma EC, including a 30 per cent. cut in agricultura —that is the major barrier to an agreement in th round—would not harm British farming unduly, this will result in an agreement. It will not. Th States will not be satisfied. I visited the United St the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare (Mr. and I share his feeling that United States and farmers will not accept a 30 per cent. cut in ag support. They know, as the Minister said this that we are halfway along that route already. dispute his assertion that we are going that wa because of GATT. We are doing so becaus problems within the CAP and the collapse of its basis. There is a determination to press the poi per cent. is not enough.

The Minister acknowledged in an interventi speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Sout

[Mr. Martyn Jones]

(Dr. Clark), who spoke from the Opposition Front Bench, that farmers will have trouble meeting the reduction in support. The farmers that I meet will not survive such a cut under the present system of support. I repeat that the proposed cut will not be enough to meet the demands of the United States. After all, it is calling for a 70 per cent. reduction in European Community support.

The United States route to an agreement will be a continuing disaster for United Kingdom farming. It has been put to me by many farmers in my constituency that the present position is a catastrophe. Prices in the local markets in my constituency are lower now than they were last year, and they were poor last year. Farmers are facing bankruptcy throughout my constituency.

Mr. Andy Stewart: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the problems of the livestock industry, especially in the area that the hon. Gentleman represents, were exacerbated by the attitude taken by the Labour party to the bovine spongiform encephalopathy scare?

Mr. Jones: As most of my farmers are sheep farmers, that is hardly likely. The hon. Gentleman would do well to study my speeches in *Hansard*. I was deeply involved in the study on BSE, and I know a good deal about the disease. I say with some humility that, as someone who knows something about the disease, I could not dispute the stance taken by my hon. Friend the Member for South Shields. The disease is worrying and needs to be studied. The Government did not move quickly enough to allay people's fears. I hope that those fears have now been allayed. Beef is safe, although I am not so sure about offal. There is a question mark over specified offals that are banned, and I hope that that ban will continue.

The farmers in my area are suffering. The price for sheep is devastatingly low, and beef is another problem. It is interesting to note that the prices in the shops have not come down for either of those commodities. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] I am glad that Conservative Members agree with me. It says a great deal for profiteering in the middle areas of distribution to the consumers.

Sometimes farmers cry wolf and complain. There is always something wrong with farming, whether it be the weather or the markets. However, in this case the figures prove that their concerns are justified. There has been a rapid increase in farming support, from 11 billion ecu in 1980 to 280 billion ecu in 1990. However, that has been accompanied by a collapse in the United Kingdom's farming economy. In real terms, it is down to a half of its level 10 years ago, and investment has also dropped by a half during the 1980s. Those figures, together with the problems created by interest rates and the effect of inflation on the input into farming, make it clear that the industry is in deep recession, and it can only get worse.

The GATT negotiations threaten the interests of all EC farmers. A settlement would involve cuts in EC support of 30 per cent.—or 75 per cent. if we agree to the demands of the United States. It would involve freer access for Third-world products into the EC market, clarification of existing import controls and their reduction by 30 per cent. —or 75 per cent., if we follow the USA line; God forbid. It would involve cuts in EC export refunds and cuts in internal support.

United Kingdom agriculture cannot stand
the palliatives suggested by the Commission
benefit even the lowland farmers of England
most of whom are too large to benefit from
measures and too rich to benefit from regiona
The palliatives certainly would not benefit far
highlands of the United Kingdom, incl
constituency.

Farmers are aware that the Uruguay rou
reducing support levels, and they are not surpri
EC is offering concessions. However, the EC ar
parties to GATT must concentrate not on cu
sake, but on putting world trade in agricultur
on a sound basis. The great criticism of the
from its subsidised export of surpluses, as
those surpluses represents by far the greatest
EC spending on farm support. If that could be
a considerable amount could be saved
measures. That may go some way towards
demands at the GATT negotiations.

Supply management could be the way
surpluses, while maintaining internal EC p
would make economic farming possible. I
designed to enable the EC to meet its GATT co
and to keep EC farm support spending a
acceptable levels. Farmers would need to co
efforts to improve efficiency and to ensure that
meets the ever-changing requirements of
Supply management is not an easy option, but
evolution of farm practices, land use and far
will continue. There must be an orderly transit
1990s, not a catastrophic collapse of the rura
which is what is now happening.

Agreement on the EC's GATT offer is o
stage. We do not know the terms of the final s
how it will be implemented in the EC, but we d
the EC surpluses and budgetary problems are
and that the Government want to make furthe
or without the new GATT commitments, the
to change the direction of its agricultural poli
not to be irreparable damage to farming.

The Government must reject the idea
towards a completely free market and instea
new system that will keep farmers farming. W
the social price for our countryside and for
friendly farming. We missed a valuable oppor
that in reforming the common agricultura
insisting on support cuts of 30 per cent., whic
case be insufficient, and which will do drastic
farmers in my constituency.

12.44 pm

Miss Elizabeth Peacock (Batley and Spen)
to learn on Tuesday that the House was no
planned debate on the textile industry on
evening. Having sat here today for three ar
hours and heard hardly a mention of textile
more sorry. We have heard a lot about agr
although we realise its importance, other as
GATT round should have a strong voice in

All aspects of GATT are important, b
particular interest in strengthening the GA
respect of textiles and clothing. The textil
looking not for protectionism but only for

trading and a strong linkage between the phasing out of the multi-fibre arrangement and the phasing in of strengthened GATT rules.

The industry has annual sales of £15 billion, and exports this year are likely to reach £4·5 billion. It also has a work force of 480,000, which emphasises the industry's importance to the British economy. It has invested heavily, to the extent of £2 billion over the past five years, and is a world leader in design, quality, innovation and exports. When my hon. Friend the Minister for Trade visited Yorkshire, he had an opportunity to see for himself some of the investment made in high technology.

In another place recently, the American ambassador, Mr. Henry Catto, addressing a dinner, said of GATT that it is a high-stake poker game. I do not play poker, but I understand from its rules that something is always thrown away on a bluff. I hope that, in the GATT round, textiles will not be thrown away to safeguard another agreement, because that would be disastrous for Britain.

I will quote briefly from a letter that many right hon. and hon. Members received from the secretary-general of the Apparel, Knitting and Textiles Alliance:

"We strongly support fair and free international trade in textiles and clothing. However, we are not prepared to see our industry seriously damaged by distorted trading practices which benefit our overseas competitors, nor traded off to ensure that a Uruguay Round agreement is reached at all costs. Textile and clothing issues in the Round must be assessed on their own merits."

That is all that the industry has ever asked of the Government.

The Punta del Este declaration, which opened the round in 1986, explicitly stated that textile and clothing trade should be integrated into GATT

"on the basis of strengthened GATT rules and disciplines."

That is a key phrase. In 1986, the then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, my right hon. Friend the Member for Southend, West (Mr. Channon), was instrumental in obtaining international acceptance of that wording, which at that time was regarded by the Government as being of major importance.

In 1988, the then Minister for Trade, my hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Sutton (Mr. Clark), said in a debate on the multi-fibre arrangement:

"I can state that, if the multi-fibre arrangement is to be discarded and if such an action is not accompanied by a satisfactory liberalisation and by a genuine strengthening of GATT rules and by proper discipline, I will not be the Minister who comes to the Dispatch Box and announces it." —[*Official Report*, 9 December 1988; Vol. 143, c. 620.]

We realise that he is no longer the person to make such an announcement, but I hope that, when my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State winds up, he can assure the House that no Minister will come to the Dispatch Box to make such a declaration.

The multi-fibre arrangement plays an essential role in allowing some regulation of the growth in imports, although not always enough to prevent damage to the British industry of the kind seen in my constituency, with the importing of acrylic yarn from Turkey. It prevented a war in a sensitive sector of trade and provided guaranteed access for poorer developing countries. However, we are not protectionist and accept that it should be phased out over an adequate period. I emphasise to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and to my hon. Friend the Minister that the industry agrees that the MFA should be phased out, but is looking for a strong link to strengthen GATT rules and disciplines at the same time. It would be helpful to receive that assurance today.

We are looking for a phasing-out period for the MF of at least 10 years, and most Community Governme agree with that time scale. Some textile and cloth industries in the community, the United States a Canada have asked for 15 years. Many develop countries would support 10 years. We support the proposal that increases in import growth rates should limited in the first stage of the phasing-out period a increased gradually. There must be an effective means enforcing respect for the GATT rules and disciplines each stage of the phasing-out period—perhaps, I sugg by suspending further import growth of any supply country that fails to open its market.

The United Kingdom clothing and textile industries strongly in favour of fair and free international trade. T are efficient and are using modern equipment and h technology to produce goods of high quality and go design for an increasingly international mark Thousands of metres of high-quality worsted cloth sitting in warehouses in west Yorkshire which were made with special personalised selvedges for sheikhs in Gulf. Money has been invested, and when the Gulf cr is resolved, we hope to be able to re-establish that trade is not possible to send that fabric to any other count because it is personalised, and those sheikhs paid hig for it.

It is not acceptable that the MFA should be phased without significant strengthening of the GATT rules a disciplines. I know that Ministers will probably be sick a tired of hearing me say that, but it cannot be said too of or too strongly, because it is very important.

The terms of the MFA phase-out period must be tigh drawn and linked at each stage to progress implementing strengthened rules and disciplines. T Government's approach in Community discussions m be vigorous and they must continue to fight for interests of our industry. A case for fairness and balance international textile and clothing trade must approached on its merits in the closing stages of the rou which in the next couple of weeks will be very import indeed.

We all agree that a strong manufacturing base is cruc to the nation's future and prosperity. A strong ho manufacturing market is central to a strong export mark Some people may say, "You would say that, because y represent a manufacturing area," but it is more than th I was born and brought up and have lived for most of life in manufacturing areas, and I therefore feel with so humility, as the hon. Member for Clwyd, South-West (M Jones) said, that I have some knowledge of what we discussing.

I was much encouraged by my discussions with right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and my h Friend the Minister on Wednesday. When my right h Friend replies to the debate, I hope that he will give House and the textile and clothing industry, which listening carefully and will carefully read what has be said, the Government's position on the phasing out of MFA and the pha[illegible]g in of the strengthened GATT rul If he assures us that the Government are fighting for a lo phasing-out period—that was my impression fr speaking to them both this week—it would encourage textile industry to invest even more. Someone is on

[Miss Elizabeth Peacock]

verge of announcing a £1 million investment in a project not many yards from my boundary, not because he sees that the wool textile industry is at its best now, but because he sees a future for it. Some reassuring comments from my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State today would help to release that £1 million investment, which we desperately need.

I apologise to my right hon. Friend for the fact that, regrettably, I cannot be here to hear his reply to the debate. Like many hon. Members this morning, I have cancelled constituency engagements at short notice to be here. With the help of British Rail, if its trains are running again, I must go back north to continue my constituency work. I hope that my right hon. Friend will accept my apology. I assure him that on Monday I shall read extremely carefully in *Hansard* what he says, in the hope that we can all reassure the textile and clothing industry that it is of prime importance not only to the Members of Parliament who represent textile areas but to Ministers, who will put emphasis on the negotiations as we approach 3 December.

12.55 pm

Mr. Alan W. Williams (Carmarthen): I shall address most of my remarks to the implications for agriculture of the GATT negotiations. It is critically important to Britain that GATT succeeds and that the latest round produces tangible results.

Britain has stood for free trade for centuries. Indeed, we could even claim to have invented world trade back in the 18th and 19th centuries in the colonies. Britain devotes a larger proportion of its GDP to trade—imports and exports—than any other country. We devote about 30 per cent., so liberalising trade is important to us.

This morning, many hon. Members have alluded to the intricate web of subsidies in world agriculture. I have read an estimate that about $200 billion-worth of subsidies have evolved worldwide. To get rid of those subsidies over a period of 10 or 15 years would offer almost as much saving in Government expenditure internationally as defence cuts.

The way in which we insulate agriculture but no other industry is incredible. I represent a constituency which has been at the sharp end of the rundown of the coal industry in the past five or six years. The coal industry has no subsidies. Nor does the motor industry. In no other industry do we guarantee a price well above world prices and guarantee a market even when there is no market for any surplus products.

The common agricultural policy is in desperate need of reform or scrapping. It costs £20 billion—or, in terms which the housewife will appreciate, £16 a week for every household in Britain. To guarantee prices way above world prices—not 10 or 20 per cent. above world prices but sometimes treble or four times those prices—stimulates the production of unwanted surpluses. In turn, those surpluses are dumped on the world markets. They are subsidised exports which undermine the exports of other economies.

The United States is perhaps the motor for changes in agricultural subsidy. Subsidies frustrate American export efforts, given that country's balance of payments deficit. I returned a couple of weeks ago from a short visit to the United States. I was struck forcibly by the price of food there, both to buy in supermarkets a restaurants. That vast continent can amounts of food, but the American under-utilise their vast potential.

Dumping on world markets autom Third-world economies. Such countries are some specialist food is the only comm export. We undermine and undercut the frustrate their development.

We have already heard that the storage those surpluses uses up more than half of t What is most absurd about this absurd po farmers get the largest subsidies. The Septe from the Commission of the European Co in Cardiff talks about the MacSharry prop

"At present 80 per cent. of the EC's resou cent. of the recipients."

Last month's newsletter from the Nati Council, which we all received, tells the different statistics. It said of the CAP:

"Around two thirds of CAP price policy the largest 28 per cent. of Community farm

It is absurd that two-thirds of the su quarter of Community farms. It means tha quarters receive only one third of the tota That means that the average big farm rec five times as much as those among the othe It is a crazy policy which allocates bigger largest farms and richest farmers becaus more. All the subsidies are production- farmer has 500 cows, he receives five time a farmer with 100 cows. To add insult poorest households spend relatively the Therefore, the price of the CAP is paid fo families and the benefits go disproporti farmers.

There is a strong environmental argum CAP. In the past few decades, agribusines parallel to it. It involves destroying hedg larger fields, spraying, and the extensive u pesticides and so on. The CAP is the n environmental policy that could be agriculture and should unquestionably reformed or scrapped. As my hon. Friend South Shields (Dr. Clark) said in his openi a tragedy that the Government and Europ the opportunity of this round of GA dramatically to reform the CAP.

I fully support the 30 per cent. Government have pursued in Europe, but small farmers during the transition that sh in the next decade. Another problem with it is remorselessly driving farmers out represent a rural constituency and many There are probably more farmers in my co in any other in England and Wales an Scotland. My constituents have small d more and more sheep have been intro quotas. As the hon. Member for Brecon a Livsey) said, the past year has been trau decreases in the price of lamb and beef. If cent. cuts in agricultural support across t of those farmers will be driven to bankrup question about that.

Small farmers are important because fabric of rural communities. Their suppo

rural schools. The Welsh language is under attack in my part of Wales when agriculture is under threat. I was brought up in the country and have lived all my life in my constituency. Many of my relatives are farmers. Over my lifetime, I have seen the amalgamation of small farms. As they come on to the market, they are gobbled up by larger farms. That amalgamation in Britain has gone ahead in a way that has not occurred in France, Germany or Italy. The average farm size in Europe is much smaller than in Britain. The last thing that we want in agreeing to the 30 per cent. cuts is for those cuts to be imposed across the board. That would drive small farmers out of business.

We should support small farms, because that is environmentally friendly agriculture. It is less intensive agriculture. It works with nature rather than attacking it. We need to reform agricultural support. Historically, the common agricultural policy has been production-based. We need to change the emphasis, so that it is environment-based. The purpose of the CAP should be to protect the countryside and the livelihoods of small farmers, to keep them in the countryside and to protect the landscape that they look after. That means giving conservation grants and support for less intensive agriculture. It means attacks on pesticides, a penalty on the use of fertilizers and support for organic farming.

We need to consider giving deficiency payments and income aids for small farmers. The present policy gives most to the largest farmers, but if we had a more uniform policy which worked more on a per farmer basis, the cost would be far less than the cost of the CAP. About £2,000 or £3,000 a year per farmer could be given through income support, income aids, conservation grants and green premium payments to protect the countryside rather than to produce unwanted supluses.

Internationally, we need to get rid of all agricultural subsidies. We need to develop free markets and a free trade in agricultural products. Britain has nothing to fear from that free trade, because of our efficient agricultural sector. In making these changes, we must protect small farmers. Public opinion is overwhelmingly hostile about the absurdities of the CAP, but the public would support some of the money—this proposal would cost about £1 billion—being used to protect the countryside.

1.8 pm

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale): Having asked my right hon. and learned Friend the former Leader of the House for an urgent debate on agriculture and the GATT round, I warmly welcome this debate and the opportunity to contribute to it, but I find it difficult, if not impossible, to concentrate and comment on this important GATT issue without some reference to yesterday's events.

We have lost a great Prime Minister. Yesterday, she put the country and the party first, something that many people said she would never do. It is ironic—as my right hon. Friend said, it is a funny old world—that we are debating this matter.

I was in Rome this week. A month ago my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister was in Rome. I believe that what occurred at the Rome summit might be called the catalyst for her ultimate resignation. History will show that she was right when she said in Rome that the priority for the EC now is not to set an agenda for further developments in the Community but to demonstrate that the member countries can work together and practical and sensible positions on the issues that a real concern.

The threat of a trade war if the GATT negotia break down must be of greater concern to the peo Europe, and of the wider world, than plotting some fu development in economic and monetary union. It essential to reach agreement on GATT, and the Mi of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food deserves credit fo persistence in the negotiations. Unfortunately, negotiations took too long to complete and the spe today have demonstrated the concern that is felt a British agriculture. The time that it took to agreement in the EC on GATT and farm prices s only to strengthen anti-farming sentiment, and tha been bad for farmers everywhere.

We need to reach agreement in the Community on to resolve internal trade disputes. The disputes occurred this year with, for example, the German French ban on beef and, more recently, over the expo livestock into France demonstrate the protectionism exists in Europe. Protectionism in the Community ca be tolerated, so we must establish a better mechanis ensure that when disputes arise they can be quickly se The United Kingdom has been communautaire thro out the negotiations this year on farm policy and tha been the test of our Euro credentials. Collaborative ac rather than rhetoric and ideology, must be the prin that guides us in the development of the EC and the s market.

Hon. Members on both sides have said that proposed reduction in farming support is hard agriculture to grasp at this time. I am in no doubt agriculture is in crisis. The cost of the CAP is growing farmers in my constituency, as in the constituenci other hon. Members, face ruin and bankruptcy. So re of the CAP is essential, but how are we to achiev Reaching a settlement in the GATT round is the first to CAP reform, because unless we establish the size o budget and the terms for world agricultural trade cannot begin to consider the changes that are needed i CAP.

Although I say that agriculture is in crisis, I agree others that much of the cost of the CAP does not farmers. I am not convinced that reductions in suppo farmers would result in major reductions in food pric the shops. For example, although the prices being rea for livestock in markets in my constituency and elsew —for beef, lamb and livestock generally—have sho substantial reduction this year, the housewives in constituency tell me that they have not noticed much reduction in prices in the shops. The answer is al obvious. The cost of the raw materials—the animals are sent to the slaughterhouse—is such a small pa what housewives pay in the supermarket these days

Mr. Livsey: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that intolerable that farmers in my constituency are s lamb at 82p per pound but that in the past fort housewives in the supermarket have had to pay £3·9 pound for the same product?

Mr. Greenway: That reflects what I have seen in constituency. Perhaps we shall need a debate on an day about the structure of the livestock market an number of people involved in the chain to try to fi

[Mr. Greenway]

better way of ensuring the lower prices that the housewife wants. Many hon. Members of all parties seem to think that by reducing agricultural support we shall see a substantial reduction in prices in the shops, but all logic dictates that that is not the case.

If we need to reform the CAP, how do we go about it? First, we must recognise that we belong to a club of 12. Competence in agricultural policy rests with the European Commission, not with national Governments. Whatever we seek to achieve must be approved by all our colleagues in Europe. I do not believe, and never have believed, that the collapse or wholesale destruction of the CAP is the answer. Hon. Members have referred to the fact that we had the opportunity in Copenhagen in 1988, but that it was not taken. I fundamentally disagree with that view. The past three years have proved that that was not the correct judgment. Our Prime Minister went as far as she could at that time to press our colleagues in Europe about CAP reform. All that has happened since has served only to demonstrate that the wholesale collapse of the CAP would mean wholesale bankruptcies for farmers, the collapse of that industry and higher—not lower—prices in the shops.

Although the task that we face is urgent, change must evolve. There needs to be a change of emphasis. I remember saying to some farmers three and a half years ago in the election campaign that we should recognise—far more than we do—the important role that they play in protecting our environment. Suddenly, everybody is suggesting that that is part of the solution.

There is much debate about the alternatives—whether we should continue to pursue an open market philosophy or whether some form of supply management would be a better bet. The attractions of the two are clear. However, British agriculture has endured the financial effects of a long and painful restructuring process. If all goes according to plan—I accept that that is a big if—we should be on the verge of reaping the reward of that painful restructuring. I am reluctant to see us throw all that away. I think back to the debates that we have had in the House in the past three years about the need to persuade our colleagues in Europe about the merits of a fair deal in terms of the green pound. All that is within our grasp.

It is appropriate that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry is to reply to the debate because, from talking to farmers, I have found that it is the effects of inflation, high interest rates and the uniform business rate on some of their diversified occupations—as much as anything else—that are causing them concern. That dictates that we must get our economic management policies right, as well as looking at the policies that affect agriculture alone.

An open market does not mean that there should be no support. Appropriate measures for the environment are being developed. It was the Conservative Government who first proposed the establishment of environmentally sensitive areas. We are right to use the hill livestock compensatory allowances scheme to support less-favoured areas.

Let me take this opportunity to refer once again to the north York moors farm scheme, launched in my constituency earlier this year by my hon. Friend the Member for Skipton and Ripon (Mr. Curry), the Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. That scheme has been on the back burner for two or three years. We want farmers to realise that the presence of sheep and suckling cows on the moors is crucial if we are to maintain the moors in their present state but that the numbers need to be limited. We must make environmental payments to support that policy. Similarly, Government support is required if we are to keep our landscape and our buildings, stone walls and hedgerows. We should take the opportunities that we have not taken in the past.

There are dangers in a control of output policy. Britain tends to play fair; others do not. I was arguing with a representative of a British company in Italy this week. He seemed to feel that all that mattereed was that one should agree with the principle and make it appear as though one was going along with everything. I do not believe that that is the answer for the Europe of the future.

The control of output will also freeze the farm structure. Are we satisfied that the present structure is entirely in Britain's interests, especially given that it is almost impossible for youngsters to go into agriculture? If we freeze that structure by controlling output, we shall prevent the United Kingdom from exploiting the more efficient methods that we all know exist.

With hindsight, milk quotas are often cited as having been a success. They certainly brought profitabiity back to the dairy industry but their introduction was a rather different experience. It was very traumatic and I remember it being extremely unpopular during the Ryedale by-election in 1986. We must face the fact that there are still major problems in our dairy industry and that even our present quota arrangements cannot continue completely unchanged.

There is a danger that output control may be used by other member states to protect small farmers. Pressure for the protection of small farmers has been seen all too clearly this year, with the outrageous attacks in France on British consignments of lambs. Two of the attacks by demonstrators, seen on television throughout the world, were on consignments of lambs from my constituency. This is perhaps not the time to enter into a detailed debate about the merits of live exports. I fully understand concerns about animal welfare, but I cannot let this opportunity pass without suggesting that if we stopped the export of live sheep and lambs to the continent, there would be disastrous consequences for sheep farmers in my constituency and, I dare say, in the constituency of the hon. Member for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams).

We should recognise the need to develop policy and take note of the fact that under GATT, restrictions would apply only to support that aids production. We can do much to help farmers that does not involve directly giving aid or encouragement to production.

In the proposals of my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food—in the position that the Government have taken in the Community and GATT—we have gone as far as we should go. They are enough. We need no more, and fairness has to be the watchword. Agriculture in Britain is undoubtedly at a watershed. We now have the opportunity of a generation to ensure the future profitability of agriculture. That issue is far too important for us to allow our rural communities to be used as a political football. It is the responsibility of the House to ensure that we are successful in the

negotiations and in the reform of the CAP. That is a great responsibility, and what we do now will dictate the pattern of our rural economy for many generations.

As my right hon. Friend the Minister said, we have a moral responsibility to the rest of the world. At prayers every day in the House we say:

"Give us this day our daily bread"

The CAP has ensured that not only has Europe been fed but housewives have been offered a greater and wider choice of food than ever before. In the GATT round we must defend our own interests and we shall. We should also work to ensure that the world is fed and success in the GATT round is the key to that.

1.25 pm

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): This is an interesting and extremely important debate. It affects everybody in Britain, and in a short time the outcome of the GATT negotiations will affect the world. We are debating a serious issue, which plainly affects jobs in many parts of Britain. It also affects the world's environment and the relationship between the northern and southern countries.

It is disturbing that the whole issue is presented as if it were a question of negotiations between, primarily at the moment, the United States and the European Community and that when they sit at the negotiating table they start talking to representatives from the southern, mainly Third-world, countries. There is an extremely important and powerful missing player representing the interests of multinational corporations, most of which are in the United States but some of which are in Europe.

I should like to quote from a fascinating article by Chakravarthi Raghavan in the most recent issue of *Resurgence*, a magazine produced in Penang, Malaysia, by the Third World Network. He said:

"It is really a worldwide economic charter for transnational companies to gain 'extraterritorial rights' in all countries, and for foreigners to have untrammelled rights to property not known since the end of the colonial era".

That was the comment of an American observer who was watching what was going on in the early stages in this Uruguay round of GATT negotiations.

We must look at the matter in the light of the world's present state. Two thirds of the world's population do not enjoy anything like the standard of living enjoyed by the majority of people in north American and western Europe. There is an annual capital flow of $150 billion from the poor southern countries to the banking systems of the north. That is mainly interest paid on the huge debt of southern countries, and that debt has been brought about by a mixture of circumstances—the very high interest rates charged in the northern countries, dominated in particular by the federal deficit of the United States, and by historically low prices for Third-world commodities. Commodities from the Third world are at their lowest price for 20 years.

There is increasing impoverishment in a large part of the world. To some extent, the GATT negotiations undermine what should be going on through the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, because the motor driving the GATT negotiations is the free-market policy of the United States and British Governments. At the end of the day, that policy leads to the loss of jobs in Britain's older industries, bankruptcies among Britain's small farmers and impoverishment in Zimbabwe, west Africa and Latin America. We are seeing a struggle between the rich, the big and the powerful, and the small and voiceless who will suffer at the end of the process.

The transnational corporations are certainly prepared. In July this year, they had their first outing at the Group of Seven industrial leaders' summit meeting in Houston. The multilateral trade negotiations coalition is chaired by the former United States trade representative, William Brock. It includes American Express, General Motors, IBM, General Electric, Cargill, Citicorp, Procter and Gamble, and other companies, as well as the United States Council for International Business, the American Business Conference, the National Association of Manufacturers, the Coalition of Service Industries and others. It describes itself as

"a broad alliance of American private sector interests committed to a strengthened and more effective multilateral trading system. The Coalition includes an array of business, farm, consumer and trade associations".

They have joined together to try to influence or dominate the GATT round. They are powerful, well financed and effective. One can see from the initial stages of the GATT negotiations just what effects they are having.

At the end of the sessions, the Brazilian ambassador, Rubens Ricupero, issued a statement on behalf of the Third-world delegation, in which he said:

"Developing countries wish to reaffirm their readiness to negotiate constructively . . . (but) will reject any attempt to impose upon them a pre-negotiation package agreed only by a few. It is with profound concern that developing countries find themselves compelled to declare that, if the current situation is not changed soon, the Uruguay Round will be in serious jeopardy as a result of the lack of political will of the major participants."

He quite correctly makes that rather guarded comment because the demands that have been put on the table will have enormous effects in many cases.

For example, the transnational corporations want larger markets for their goods. They want to be able to control those markets, and above all they want to control the ability of Third-world producers to compete. There is growing evidence that the multinational corporations that own patent rights to new manufacturing processes carry them out in western Europe or north America, but do not allow local manufacturers in Third-world countries to operate them. That is a kind of economic colonialism in manufacturing ability. This has been demonstrated in the production of CFC alternatives, and time and time again in high-tech industries, particularly electronics. These corporations are permanently trying to dominate what goes on.

The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. Peter Lilley): Can the hon. Gentleman give examples of this phenomenon? As I understand it, it would require a national Government to uphold a patent the use of which was deliberately suppressed in satisfying the needs of its consumers nationally, which would be a rather unusual practice.

Mr. Corbyn: The most obvious example is the one that I have already given—the production of CFC alternatives. They can be manufactured only under licence granted by the owner of the patent, so if a Third-world country wishes to encourage the development of the CFC alternative—an ozone-friendly product, for want of a better word—it can do so only by paying a large fee to the original manufacturer. That was one of the issues raised by Mrs.

[Mr. Corbyn]

Gandhi at the conference on global warming and the destruction of the ozone layer. There are many other examples.

We should also be concerned about the effect on the environment of the growth of free trade policies. There is understandably a welcome growing concern about the effects on the environment of the destruction not just of the rain forests, tragic though that is, but of the temperate forests and the savannah grasslands, and the pollution of the southern oceans. These are the three major areas of the change of carbon dioxide into oxygen. We are right to be concerned about this.

If we adopt a trade model that encourages the maximisation of the use for agricultural purposes of land that provides an immediate return on capital rather than a long return, the result is the destruction of more rain forests, because one can produce a little more beef for a short time, never mind that in the long term it is disastrous.

I hope that the Secretary of State will tell us what work has been done on the environmental effects of the free trade policies being promoted. It is all very well for the British Government to increase the funds that they make available to the environment commission of the United Nations. I am glad they have. I welcome that move, but there must be a recognition that the destruction of the environment comes from many sources, including the trade policies that are now being followed.

The development of free trade policies benefits the richest and the most powerful throughout the world. We are not dealing with free trade that is fair. There is a contrast between a large grain-producing operation in the mid-west of the United States, or Canada, with all the cheap production facilities that are available to it, along with a high degree of mechanisation, good transport infrastructure and everything else, and a small farmer in Zimbabwe attempting to grow maize for the local market.

We find throughout the world that large subsidies are given to large producers. We find also that many of the products of Europe and north America end up being dumped into third world markets. For example, wheat is sold for $160 a tonne as a guaranteed price in Europe or north America, and it finds its way to Nigeria as a dumped product, where it is sold for $60 a tonne. That depresses local productive ability, because the local product cannot be sold at that sort of figure. Local farmers go out of business because of the impact of imported wheat.

It is ironic to find in Zimbabwe and throughout southern Africa, which is a beef-producing area, that European beef is being sold while local farmers go out of business. If self-reliance in Third-world agriculture is to be promoted, as the United Nations and many others suggest, trade policies and the trade environment will have to reflect that. The United States Secretary of Agriculture John Brock, has said:

"Self-reliance in Africa is a romantic anachronism."

His agenda is extremely clear.

There will have to be three objects for farming and farm products. First, we must end over-production. The over-production that is taking place in Europe and the United States is damaging and obscenely wasteful. It is damaging to the environment, and it is obviously obscenely wasteful when products that are the result of over-production are being burnt in an attempt to maintain prices. The 30 per cent. reduction in subsidy will mean that farmgate prices will increase by about 7 per cent. in real terms over the next five years. The people who will suffer most as a result of that are the small farmers that my hon. Friend the Member for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams) was talking about, not the large producers in Europe or north America.

Secondly, we must end export dumping. Instead, we must promote aid and trade policies that encourage self-reliant production, which is more protective of the local economy and less dependent on the economies of western Europe and of the United States. Such production would obviously require less transportation.

Thirdly, what happens to the political sovereignty of poor countries that do not have the infrastructure that is available in Europe and north America when they are told that, because of the debt crisis, they must open up their economies to multinational capital to do whatever it will, and when the IMF and the World bank tell them that they must cut social expenditure? They are now told that they must pursue free trade policies for farm products. Those policies add up to disaster for poor countries.

I hope that the Secretary of State will show when he replies that he recognises that the policies that are being promoted by the Government that he represents, by the United States Administration and by the European Community are not beneficial to environmental protection throughout the world or to the poorest people in the poorest countries. They are a continuation and extension of the growing impoverishment of two thirds of the world, which has been going on ever since the end of the second world war.

We need to think about the world in a global sense, about the obscenity of poverty throughout the world, and about the danger that environmental destruction creates for every person in this world. The GATT round provides the opportunity to deal with some, if not all, of those issues.

1.40 pm

Mr. Gary Waller (Keighley): I am sorry that, during this important debate, so little time has been devoted to discussing textile issues. I remind my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State that the textile and clothing industry still employs 480,000 people—many fewer than the 700,000 that it employed when I came to the House, but nevertheless a substantial number.

No one could exaggerate the importance of pending decisions to be taken by the Government and their European partners as they approach the climax of the Uruguay round during the next few days. If the right decisions are taken, the industry will continue to be one of the great contributors to our future economic growth. But if our industry is betrayed, there will be empty shells of once-thriving mills, a serious contraction in the industry, and many more of its work force walking the streets. Those directly employed in the industry and their dependants add up to well over 1 million people, most living in the midlands, the north and in Scotland, and a large percentage of them currently represented by Conservative Members. They will pay close attention to the words of my right hon. Friend when he replies to the debate.

Matters of the utmost national importance are involved. I hope that my right hon. Friends the Members for Henley (Mr. Heseltine), for Huntingdon (Mr. Major)

and for Witney (Mr. Hurd) will also give some thought to those issues during the next few days, even though I fully appreciate that they have many other matters on their minds. I shall draw my remarks and those of other hon. Members who have spoken in the debate to the attention of my right hon. Friends. I am sure that they will wish to remember just how many of our fellow citizens will be affected by the GATT decisions.

The textile industry knows full well, from bitter experience, that many other countries that erect barriers to our exports and put obstacles in the way of free trade have never ceased to drag their feet when pressed to do so. By now, it should be fully understood that they will not yield ground voluntarily. A tough negotiating stance, linking the gradual ending of the multi-fibre arrangement derogation with a GATT agreement that really points towards free and fair trade, is vital. That appears to be well understood by a number of our EC partners, which are arguing in favour of a phasing-out period of 10 to 15 years. Compared with the position when MFA4 was negotiated four years ago, we now appear to be taking a less robust line.

I am afraid that my right hon. Friend, in his speech to the British Clothing Industry Association, blew a hole in our negotiating stance when he said that the Government continue to argue that 10 years would be too long a transitional period. I understand that because of divisions among members of the Community on that issue, the British stance could prove to be decisive. We should be arguing in favour of a longer, rather than a shorter, phase-out period. It should be clearly understood that the speed of its implementation is linked to the willingness of other countries to abide by more open trading rules.

It is essential that a strong mechanism should link the stages in the phasing out of the MFA with clear signs that progress has been made in implementing strengthened GATT rules and disciplines. Unless a formal mechanism exists, it is unlikely that some states will abide by their obligations. If they believe that the MFA will be abolished regardless of compliance with the rules, they will merely wait for that development. It would also be disastrous for substantial additional access to be given to the import of textiles and clothing in the first stage of the phasing-out period, and for excessively large increases in import growth rates to be given before the existing distortions in world trade have been affected by the new GATT regime.

We must point to the many, many examples—I do not have time to cite them—of countries with enormous barriers to our exports. For example, India has a substantial number of potential purchasers for our high-quality goods, but it prohibits the import of textiles and clothing similar to those produced domestically, and it charges tariffs of 200 per cent. and more on the remainder. How can anyone excuse the United States for charging 36 per cent. import duties on British wool cloth —more than twice as much as the duty imposed on any goods flowing the other way across the Atlantic? The United States has graciously offered to knock off a few percentage points, but nothing off such important British exports as sweaters.

It is all very well to talk glibly of strengthened rules and disciplines. We hear words, but commitments are strangely lacking in respect of subsidies, the theft of designs—which is all too prevalent—dumping and safeguards. We are still miles away from reaching a satisfactory conclusion.

Will my right hon. Friend aim at a 10-year phasing-out period for the multi-fibre arrangement? Until recently, the Government argued for six years, and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said that 10 years would be too long. However, a few days ago, he seemed to imply that 10 years might be about right.

When the fourth multi-fibre arrangement was negotiated, we seemed to be in the middle range of EC countries in terms of the objectives sought, but many others are now being much more robust than we are. Their textile and clothing industries are arguing for as long as 15 years to phases out the MFA, as are the United States and Canada. It is illogical to abandon all its safeguards well before GATT rules and disciplines can properly be put into effect.

Will my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State make reciprocity a central tenet of his policy, so that any country that fails to open up its market will be denied import growth into the Community? Will he advocate a staged phasing-out of the MFA, so that import and export growth rates are gradual, as stronger GATT rules and disciplines take effect, with appropriate safeguards against import surges?

Let no one doubt the impact that failure would have. If agreement is reached to phase out the MFA without a strong successor regime to replace it, our counterparts in the United States Congress will inevitably insist on overruling the presidential veto and, by rejecting the Uruguay round, create a cocoon of even greater protectionism round America. That would bring in its wake a diversion of trade to which the United Kingdom market would be more vulnerable than any of its fellow European member states.

If such developments come to pass as a result of inadequate and indeed spineless action on our part, who knows what the effect will be in terms of job losses? Will the number be only 33,000, as Professor Silberston estimates—although his figures are challenged by almost everyone in the industry—or 100,000, as the Trades Union Congress suggests?

I plead with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State never to say again, as he did recently, that over the economy as a whole, the gains to employment from freer trade would exceed the losses. Fair trade would probably create more jobs, rather than bring unemployment—but one-sided free trade will certainly bring job losses in textiles that could never be replaced. Such losses, which would be concentrated in areas where no other employment is available, could never be compensated for by the vague prospect of a marginal increase in jobs spread thinly throughout the country.

God forbid that any Minister should be allowed to think that the British textile industry can be traded off against others. It follows that any agreement to phase out existing protection, however desirable, must be accompanied by a genuine commitment on the part of all concerned to fair and free trade, must be conditional on the latter—and should not be regarded as the prior condition for it.

We heard on the radio this morning that the contenders for the leadership of the Conservative party would not have to concentrate on the House of Commons today because it was not holding an important debate. Perhaps this debate is more important than some people think. If the textile and clothing industries, which are vital to so many people, are driven towards the precipice, that folly

[Mr. Gary Waller]

would blight irretrievably the honeymoon period of any incoming Prime Minister. The subject of today's debate may be his first vital test, and one that he and other members of the Cabinet must not fail.

1.49 pm

Mr. Andy Stewart (Sherwood): After the heady days of the past week, it is a welcome return to the real world of debating a major issue of much importance to my constituents—the final outcome of the Uruguay GATT negotiations.

A successful outcome is paramount for two major industries—agriculture and apparel knitwear and textiles. Those industries employ more than 5,000 people in Sherwood, whose jobs are at risk in the European Commission's position weakens in favour of our competitors.

A battery of television cameras, the like of which we have never seen before, was assembled outside the House on Tuesday night because of interest in one job. Can you imagine, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the success that we would have in achieving our aims if pro rata coverage were given for the 1 million jobs that depend on prosperous agriculture and AKT industries? As that clearly would not happen, I felt duty-bound to be here today to remind my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State of the crisis in agriculture and the views of the AKT industries, which lie beyond the end of the multi-fibre arrangement.

My right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food is aware of the near panic among farmers about declining profitability and uncertainty. Since 1979, farmgate prices have risen by only 60 per cent., whereas the retail prices index has risen by 150 per cent. Real farming income has fallen at an average annual rate of 24 per cent. since 1979. Compare that with one supermarket chain that recently announced half-yearly profits of £273 million—a return on capital of 7·3 per cent. In agriculture, the figure is nearer 2 per cent., but for many farmers there is no return at all.

I believe that there is a future for agriculture, but my right hon. Friend the Minister must ensure that that is so by insisting, when the GATT negotiations are completed, that the settlement bears equally on farmers in the United States, the European Community and worldwide. It must be implemented within the EEC in a way that does not discriminate against Britain's farmers.

Working alongside the mining industry in my constituency's towns and villages is the textile and clothing industry, which employs 2,300 people. They are concerned about the removal of the multi-fibre arrangement. I must thank my hon. Friend the Minister for Trade, who is responsible for this industry, for visiting my constituency on 1 November to hear the views and concerns of constituents who are dependent on the AKT industry. To restate the case against is unnecessary, but I must remind my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State that an MFA phase-out period of less than 10 years would be unacceptable. It would be intolerable if an agreement were reached to phase out the MFA while leaving the textile and clothing industries exposed to grossly unfair conditions of competition.

The results would be disastrous, with a huge loss of jobs in the United Kingdom. That would be a double blow to employment in my constituency, which has lost 8,000 mining jobs—a loss from which we are just beginning to recover. Therefore, I and my constituents who work in the AKT industries want from GATT the elimination of abuses such as prohibitive tariff barriers, trade distortions subsidies and dumping and, more generally, the strengthening of competition. Given that, the clothing and textile industries would accept any challenge.

1.53 pm

Ms. Joyce Quin (Gateshead, East): This has been a wide-ranging debate and many important issues have been raised.

To some, the GATT round may seem an obscure subject. Indeed, one newspaper article that I read suggested that if anyone heard the expression "Uruguay round" he might think that it was an obscure form of the rhumba. Despite that, GATT and the Uruguay round is crucial to the future of world trade.

Our debate is timely in one sense. It is intended that the negotiations will conclude in December. I had some sympathy with the view expressed by the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare (Mr. Wiggin). He lamented the fact that we had not had more detailed debates on the subject at an earlier stage. Given the complexity of many of the issues, I concur with that judgment.

It is worrying that we are close to a conclusion on the GATT round when so many issues have not been properly thought through and worked out. The details are still not available to us. Perhaps the Secretary of State can reassure us on some of those points. Various accounts in the press in recent weeks have alleged that the talks were about to break up without conclusion, when many issues remained to be resolved.

An evaluation has been carried out of the likely effect of the conclusion of the GATT round on certain sectors of the United Kingdom economy. Perhaps the Secretary of State can give us more details of that and the consultations that he has had with industry and the many people from groups within the United Kingdom who are concerned to see a successful conclusion to the round of talks.

For industry the outcome is particularly crucial. Industry faces a difficult future in Britain, as several hon. Members pointed out. High interest rates, high inflation, the need to adjust to membership of the exchange rate mechanism of the European monetary system and, of course, the competition that industry expects to face as a result of the completion of the large European single market in 1992 already put pressures on industry. So the additional effect of GATT must be borne in mind.

I accept the argument that there is a wide and general acceptance of the overall benefits of trade liberalisation. It will bring benefits to us in the United Kingdom and, indeed, to the rest of the world. The president of the World bank, Mr. Barber Connable, said:

"protection by industrial nations costs developing countries more than twice as much as they receive in aid."

Again, there are worries about trade liberalisation. I was glad that my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) laid such stress on the needs of developing countries. This year's World bank development report expresses anxiety that some of the benefits of the round for developing countries will be unequally divided, and that while certain middle-income countries, and even some poorer ones will benefit, unless the rules are framed in a particular way, the losers could be poor countries such as

Somalia, which are heavily dependent on basic commodity exports. Such countries might lose the relative advantage that they now enjoy through special trade preferences. Trade liberalisation must not mean that the poorest suffer. That would be a terrible indictment on GATT. Countries that allowed that to happen would bear a grave responsibility.

Trade liberalisation also brings some minor dangers. This week I was reading about the difficulty that Thailand faces in stopping imports of cigarettes from the United States. Its commitment to introduce free trade may mean that it will have to accept imports that it does not want. That shows a health aspect of trade liberalisation. It may be a minor point, but such examples may be repeated in many parts of the world.

Many hon. Members said that we are talking about not only free but fair trade. The expression "level playing field" was used once again. It was used by the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in his opening remarks. Even in the European Community a level playing field can be notoriously difficult to achieve, so it will not be easy to achieve level playing fields in the many policy areas dealt with in the GATT negotiations. However, the effort must be made.

One point that I should like to put to the Secretary of State is the problem that trade negotiations which we may conduct bilaterally or between ourselves and groups of countries could cut across the GATT negotiations. That should be avoided if at all possible. For example, the European Community is trying to negotiate a free trade agreement with certain Gulf countries, partly for political reasons. We are worried about the possible effects on our petrochemicals industry and that such negotiations may cut across GATT and some of the principles embodied in it. Perhaps the Secretary of State will comment on that.

Some countries are not members of GATT. Because the former eastern bloc and the Soviet Union now need access to the wider trading community, it is important that we frame the GATT rules in such a way that their interests, too, are taken into account in future. The short-term and long-term needs of eastern Europe and the Soviet Union need to be borne in mind.

A theme mentioned frequently in the debate has been the position of developing countries. As I have said, I am worried that in certain instances the poorest countries could be adversely affected by some of the negotiations. Can the Secretary of State update us on and tell us what discussions there have been about the different categories of developing countries and the need to ensure that the losers are not the poorest developing countries?

My hon. Friend the Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) wrote to the Minister for Trade expressing concern about the effect of opening up the market in services on certain developing countries. The reply stated:

"we believe that all countries stand to benefit from the introduction of a set of fair multilateral rules, which will take account of the needs of different parties and provide a stable environment for growth and development."

I should like more details about how the Government have sought to promote a stable environment for growth and development as part of the discussions on opening up GATT to areas that have previously not been included in the negotiations.

The Uruguay round needs to be sensitive not only to trade, but to world social and environmental considerations. I was pleased that several hon. Members referred to the environment in their speeches. The Minister mentioned the need for agriculture to be more environmentally sensitive. That is certainly something for which we have called for many years. My hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North referred to the environmental aspect of trading issues, which, too, is important and needs to be borne in mind.

I am a little worried at the reply from the Department of Trade and Industry to my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) who, in a written question, urged that environmental aspects should be taken into account in the Uruguay round. The Government's reply was:

"it would not be practical to seek to introduce any major new initiatives at this stage."—[*Official Report*, 1 November 1990; Vol. 178, c. *772*.]

Despite the dangers of making the issues even more complex, environmental considerations must not be overlooked because they are vital to the survival of the planet. The reply is disappointing. It also seems to be at variance with earlier promises made by the Prime Minister in the wake of the publication of the Bruntland report, that environmental considerations should be brought into the GATT negotiations. Her statements were subsequently repeated by the Secretary of State for the Environment in May this year. The idea of "environmental conditionality" —countries should not be penalised for taking measures if the main purpose is to protect the environment—is an important principle. I wonder whether the Secretary of State would care to comment on that important aspect, about which we are particularly concerned.

With so many complications, it is perhaps not surprising that the right hon. Member for Southend, West (Mr. Channon) referred to the timetable of the GATT negotiations and expressed concern that it would not be possible to sort out all those issues in December. The momentum towards the conclusion of the agreement should not be lost, but all the issues need to be tackled. If that means postponing the talks while giving a clear timetable for the final agreement and doing so in a positive rather than negative sense, that should be considered. Perhaps the Secretary of State is in a better position to inform us on that aspect.

Not surprisingly, agricultural matters have figured large in the debate. My hon. Friend the Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) dealt with those matters at length, as did the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. We believe that it is important to include agricultural issues within GATT. Many critical comments have rightly been made about the CAP and some of its worst features. I admit that I have done little work on agricultural issues in recent years, but I was a member of the European Parliament's agriculture committee and I remember how strong the agricultural lobby was at that stage. Our agriculture committee included Members of the European Parliament who were beef, pig or dairy farmers, cereal producers, oilseed rape growers, wine producers, sugar beet growers and even, much to my surprise, a buffalo farmer.

At that stage, the agricultural lobby was perhaps stronger in the European Parliament and European institutions than it is now. I strongly believe that agriculture is a vital sector of our economy and that healthy agriculture and environmentally friendly agriculture are extremely important. Some of the provisions of the CAP represent a particularly damaging form of protection and we need to be concerned about those

[Ms. Joyce Quin]

aspects. We all have an interest in reform because of the misdirection of resources in the European budget in terms of agriculture and the effect of export refunds on some of the poorest countries, although hon. Members are perhaps divided on the issue of the pace of reform.

Considerable reference has been made in the debate to textiles. The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food said that hon. Members should not be constrained about putting forward their special constituency interests. They have certainly not been constrained. Hon. Members have eloquently expressed the interests of their constituents, particularly those employed in the textile and clothing industries. Like agriculture, that is an important sector, involving more than 400,000 jobs. It is the fifth largest manufacturing sector and an important export earner. It should be said, lest people feel that the multi-fibre arrangement has been the cause of total protection, that we have a considerable trade deficit in textiles, with £3·6 billion of our annual deficit being accounted for by the deficit in the textile and allied industries. Given our bad balance of payments, it is not surprising that hon. Members who spoke in support of the textile industry are conscious of the effect of a further deterioration in that industry and a consequent deterioration in our balance of payments.

The textile industry is vital to United Kingdom regions, particularly the north-west, Yorkshire and Humberside and the east midlands. Hon. Members from those areas have put the regional aspects to us. They are not among the most prosperous British regions. For that reason also the representations that have been made on behalf of the textile industry must be taken strongly into account. The Opposition's line on textiles has been supported by many Conservative Members in the two early-day motions on the Order Paper.

Mr. Waller: Perhaps I might correct the hon. Lady. Early-day motion 1 was tabled by me, a Conservative, although I am glad that it has been supported by many Opposition Members.

Ms. Quin: I am not sure that I claimed for the Opposition the authorship of both early-day motions. I confirm that both have a large number of signatures from both sides of the House.

Within the textile arrangement that manages the growth of imports—it does not prevent the growth of imports in textiles—we must be sensitive to the position of poorer countries. Many of the poorest are worried about a free-for-all in textiles because they feel that they will be excluded by the middle-income textile producers and that their relative position will become even worse.

I do not have time to mention many other issues with which I should like to deal. My hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) raised an interesting aspect when he referred to the social dimension of trade negotiations. While opening up trade, we should not simply increase the possibilities of exploitation of people who earn little or who work in appalling conditions. It is important to remember the need to improve wages and conditions, although I do not expect much joy from the Government on that, given their well-known objection to the conclusion of the European social charter.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wallsend Garrett) rightly pointed out the importance to the Kingdom of the service sector and the negotiations area. The opening up of GATT to include services be beneficial, but what help will there be for deve countries in the transition to an open market? W Secretary of State comment on the attitude of the States, which seems to be dragging its feet on se despite the fact that it was initially in favour of the o up of the market in services? Indeed, the *Financial* today carries a worrying article saying:

"Financial services have been left out of the draft an agreement to liberalise world trade in services."

Mr. Ted Garrett: While my hon. Friend is being of America, would she extend her criticism to the Germany and its reluctance to move on insuranc other allied services?

Ms. Quin: That aspect was mentioned in the deba we had a few weeks ago on the opening up of the Eur market in services.

All parties to the GATT negotiations still have concessions to make to ensure that agreement is rea Like others, I hope that the negotiations are success would be a tragedy if, after political barriers had down, the world was faced with trading blocks an trade barriers. The goal of one world is economicall politically important. The GATT negotiations s keep that goal constantly in mind.

2.13 pm

The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry Peter Lilley): The hon. Member for Gateshead, East Quin) is right to emphasise the importance of the Ur round and to regret the lack of understanding of it in quarters. That was brought home to my by a busines who said that I was spending too much time on the a of one Latin American country and should get on wi business of extending free trade world wide. important, and it is in recognition of its importance as my hon. Friend the Member for Keighley (Mr. W pointed out, Cabinet Ministers are opening and cl today's debate, which is not normal on a Friday.

Why is the GATT round so important? First, be we cannot afford to let it fail. Failure would mean not a continuation of the status quo, but the erosion o multilateral trading system that has served us so we over 40 years. It would also mean an increa protectionism and beggar-my-neighbour policies, trading blocs and trade wars. The great depression o 1930s is a salutary reminder of what can happen i absence of multilateral trading rules. The stock m crash of 1929 led to an escalation of trade protection result was a reduction in world trade in manufactures per cent. and in world manufacturing output of 3 cent. over the next three years.

Secondly, the round is important because of positive benefits that a successful outcome will brin my right hon. Friend the Member for Southend, (Mr. Channon) brought to the attention of the Hou his distinguished speech. Statistics are a dangerous and one cannot quantify the benefits of liberalisation any precision, but the lowest estimate that I have se that a 30 per cent. cut in all tariff and non-tariff bar which is what the Uruguay round sets out to ach would increase Community and British exports to the

of the world by 2 per cent. in volume terms. That is a large amount of trade. I have seen estimates for the Community of as high as 8 per cent., which would be consistent with an increase in income—in the GDP of the Community—of no less than 3 per cent.

Thirdly, the round matters because the former state-controlled economies of eastern Europe are turning to the market and looking for a place in the world trading system. It would be tragic if we failed them now.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Southend, West asked a number of questions, especially whether I could inform the House of the prospects and the time deadline. The round faces several considerable difficulties, as is well known, especially because of the Community's recent problems in formulating its offer on agriculture by the agreed deadline, which put pressure on the whole timetable. Negotiations are so complex and involve such difficult political decisions that without the discipline of a deadline, we would never reach agreement. The December ministerial meeting has been the agreed deadline for the past two years. It is important that we respect that deadline and make it the key to political decisions in Brussels in December. That does not rule out some tidying up of the technical details following those key decisions during January.

However, we are under an absolute deadline of 1 March when the fast-track procedure of the American Congress expires. We must have everything converted into legislative form by then, or it will be subject to detailed debate and voting in the United States Congress, and the whole thing could become unravelled. As that will take several months, the deadline by which we must make the key political decisions is the end of this year.

There is still a lot of work to do and success is far from guaranteed, but I believe that it will be possible to reach a successful outcome. We had a meeting of Trade Ministers in Brussels on 15 November and all were agreed that we had to be committed to a successful outcome. No country has introduced new road blocks or non-negotiable demands into the process.

If the House will forgive me, I shall not dwell on agriculture because my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food dealt with that subject with immense expertise and ability at the beginning of the debate. There have been several interesting speeches on it, not least from my hon. Friend the Member for Weston-super-Mare (Mr. Wiggin), who brings to bear his expertise as Chairman of the Select Committee on Agriculture, which is matched and balanced by the fact that he is Chamberlain's great-grandson, giving him some understanding of industrial issues also. Several other hon. Members, including my hon. Friend the Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart), have spoken on that matter.

Several significant speeches have been made on the textile industry. My hon. Friends the Members for Batley and Spen (Mrs. Peacock), for Keighley, for Pudsey (Sir G. Shaw) and for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo) recently came to see me about that subject. My hon. Friends the Members for Batley and Spen and for Keighley argued forcefully for their constituents and for that important industry. I recognise that the textile and clothing industry is vital not just to the Community but, more important, to the United Kingdom—in terms of output, exports and the number of people employed. That is why, when we agreed to phase out the MFA, we insisted on strengthening the rules and disciplines and on bette market access. That was the commitment made at the sta of the Uruguay round and it is one to which we adhere

My hon. Friends and the industry have three ke concerns. The first is the timing of the integration o textiles into the GATT round and the normal GAT procedures. The second concerns the linkage of tha phase-out with strengthened rules and disciplines. Th third concerns the extent to which it will have an impact o jobs and the industry in this country.

The length of the transitional period has to b negotiated in GATT. However, in deciding how we woul argue for the establishment of the European Community' position, we took into account three considerations. First the length of the transitional period must be realistic an we must obtain overall agreement from the under developed and developing countries to ensure that the join in the whole Uruguay round and that we get a satisfactory settlement out of the round as a whole, no just for the textile industry.

Secondly, we must provide a proper time scale and pac of adjustment for the United Kingdom industry, whic must have time to adjust satisfactorily.

Thirdly, as in any negotiations, we must recognise tha we will not get everything for which we ask—nor wil others. The British industry has tended to say that it woul be satisfied with a minimum phase-out period of 10 years Some countries have demanded 15 years or more, whic would probably wreck the chances of agreement on the GATT round as a whole. We have argued for a phase-ou period of less than 10 years, but that is a natural part of the bargaining process and it would be absurd to suggest wha the final position will be. We have left the Community with a negotiating position and some flexibility in negotiating within the GATT round. I hope that my hon. Friends wil agree that that is a sensible approach.

Mr. Waller: If one is negotiating, surely one's most likely approach is to ask for at least as much as one wants. It is unusual to ask for less. A number of countries in the Community are asking for more than 10 years. If we want an MFA phase-out period approaching 10 years, it is not very sensible of us to say that we would be satisfied with considerably less.

Mr. Lilley: It is a two-stage process. First, we have to reach a settlement within the Community on a range within which it can negotiate. The second stage is GATT. We must ensure that the Community does not establish a target that will make success in the wider GATT round impossible. Some countries in the Community are less attached to the success of the overall GATT round than we are. We have the greatest interest in the successful outcome of the round because 25 per cent. of all our goods and services are exported. It is vital—not least to the textile industry—that we should have access to world markets.

The industry is also concerned about the mechanism for phasing out restrictions. It is important that the process should be reasonably smooth. If we leave too much to the last minute, the adjustment will be abrupt and unpalatable.

Prospects for linkage are brighter in some respects than the industry fears. It is not a matter of the MFA ending before tougher rules and disciplines are brought in, because some of those rules and disciplines will come into effect from the start. For example, changes in the

[Mr. Lilley]

anti-dumping rules and the revised system of safeguards should come in immediately, and important steps should be taken to improve access to overseas markets for our exporters. We want to see export subsidies phased out over the same time span. Naturally, we would like them phased out in a shorter time, but we would accept the time span over which textiles are phased into the MFA.

Some people argue that it is not so much a question of agreeing in principle to stronger rules and disciplines, but of seeing them work in practice. The whole point of rules and disciplines is that they allow infractions to be dealt with through the GATT machinery for dispute settlement. If in the last resort breaches persist and people do not comply with the rules, the Community has the right of retaliation, if necessary on a cross-sectoral basis. Naturally, one hopes to avoid that because we want peace in the trade world, not trade wars. I am confident that the general GATT dispute settlement procedures will be greatly improved.

There are good chances of a satisfactory text in the textiles agreement which will provide for the monitoring of commitments undertaken in other GATT areas.

It is important for industry to know to what extent it will find new textile markets overseas. The industry has a good export record and in some areas where tariffs have come down for one reason or another the textile industry has substantially increased its exports. We want that to happen more widely. However, we must recognise that much of the penetration of the British market has not been by less developed countries but by other countries in the Community. Some 53 per cent. of our imports of clothing and textiles come from other Community countries. They will face the greatest intensification of competition as the MFA is phased out, and we may see some change of source of exports to Britain rather than a continuing increase in imports. I hope that the industry will continue with great energy and determination to upgrade products, quality, design and fashionability so that it can win higher-value markets at home and abroad.

One of the most important sectors is, of course, services. The hon. Member for Gateshead, East asked about the prospects for services and the attitude of the Americans. It is regrettable that America, which initially pressed for services to be included in the round, is now saying that some sectors should be taken out. It is important that the most-favoured nation principle should be accepted in principle for the whole service area, even though to start with there may have to be derogations for specific sectors such as civil aviation which is almost inherently dealt with bilaterally.

Time is so short that we want to get the whole GATT round committed to the principle of including services in the multilateral trading system. We accept that more may have to be negotiated in detail over a longer period. still going for success in that area which we immensely important for Britain and the Commu

There are some other important new areas, intellectual property rights, which are of interest textile industry. The protection of patents, trade copyright and designs is an increasingly importan of international trade and not only in high-tec goods. The absence of protection for these inte property rights in overseas markets can distort tra lead to serious loss of revenue for British firms.

Part of the problem is piracy and counterfeiting in counterfeit goods accounts for between 3 and 6 p of world trade. United Kingdom drug compani about £50 million, the record industry $1 billion, European motor parts industry $200 million ea through counterfeiting or piracy. We want more co especially in the developing world, to establish l protecting patents and other intellectual property Without this our companies have no legal remedy products are reproduced without their agreement. just as much a barrier to trade as a quota or a tar unfair trade, and unfair trade is unacceptable.

An agreement on adequate protection would o new markets for many of our companies. There is st of work to be done to agree on standards of protecti means of enforcing these, but agreement is high on of priorities.

Time does not permit me to cover all the important questions raised in the debate, but I shall underlining how important this is. The Uruguay r probably the most complex trade negotiatio attempted. It covers 15 major areas and involv countries and territories. At stake is the future of th trading system, which has brought us unprece growth and prosperity. The outcome must be a p that satisfies and includes everyone. All Governmen to take difficult decisions if we are to achieve th cannot simply take what we want and ignore w dislike. If we succeed, everyone will gain, and if everyone will be the poorer.

It being half-past Two o'clock, the motion Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question

IMPORT AND EXPORT CONTROL BI

Ordered,

That, in respect of the Import and Export Contr notices of Amendments, new Clauses and new Schedul moved in Committee may be accepted by the Clerks Table before the Bill has been read a second time.- *Nicholas Baker.]*

CARAVANS (STANDARD COMMUNIT CHARGE AND RATING) BILL

Ordered,

That, in respect of the Caravans (Standard Com Charge and Rating) Bill, notices of Amendment Clauses and new Schedules to be moved in Committee accepted by the Clerks at the Table before the Bill ha read a second time.—*[Mr. Nicholas Baker.]*

M20 (Widening)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Nicholas Baker.]*

2.31 pm

Sir John Stanley (Tonbridge and Malling): I am delighted that we have left until last the major issue of the week—the widening of the M20 between junctions 3 and 5. I am also delighted to see that my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment is to reply to the debate.

I understand the need for the widening scheme, as do the majority of my constituents. This section of the M20 is the point at which all the traffic from the M25 north and south going both to and from the Channel tunnel will be funnelled. Therefore, it is no surprise that the Department of Transport feels that it is necessary to widen the motorway from three to four lanes.

I have four specific aspects of the scheme to raise. The first is what appears to be an inordinate delay by the Department of Transport in publishing its proposals. I find it hard to understand why it has taken so long. This is not a new motorway. It is a matter simply of constructing an additional carriageway to the motorway. The press notice issued by the Department on 25 August 1989 assured us:

"The improvements will be contained within the existing highway boundary wherever possible."

Therefore, no material additional land should be required, and one would have thought that the detailed line of the scheme could be published quickly.

The consultant engineers acting for the Department —Gifford Graham and Partners—were appointed last August. The latest information that I have from my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport is:

"We hope"—

not we will—

"to announce detailed proposals next year."

I do not understand why it is taking two years or possibly longer for the Department to publish its proposals as to where the extra lane will be fitted into the motorway. I should be grateful if my hon. Friend could tell us what the timing will be for the publication of those proposals. I hope that he will do all that he can to accelerate their publication.

I have a letter from Mr. A. D. Springett of the Department, dated 31 May 1989, in which he says:

"The Department hopes that the widening will be completed in time for the opening of the Channel Tunnel in 1993."

If that is the position, I think that my hon. Friend will recognise that the Department must get its skates on, especially if it is not intending to publish the line until some time next year.

Secondly, I consider that there is a glaring inadequacy in the 67 m distance within which, and only within which, it is possible to serve blight notices on the Department of Transport by home owners whose properties have effectively been rendered unsaleable by the scheme. Blight notices are, of course, an important protection for individual home owners whose properties are effectively rendered unsaleable by a firm highway proposal. As I understand it, a person whose property is rendered effectively unsaleable by a firm highway proposal has a legal entitlement to serve a blight notice on the highway authority, secure the full unblighted value of his property and be enabled to move. That is entirely right, but I m tell my hon. Friend that the theory is not working properly in practice in this circumstance.

Very many of my constituents whose homes are bey the 67 m blight line have found that their properties h been rendered unsaleable by the publication of Department's proposals. They have been rende unsaleable by the publication of the intention to emb on the scheme, but they are doubly unsaleable becaus the step that the Department has entirely properly correctly taken, which is to instruct the local plann authority, Tonbridge and Malling borough council, t when prospective purchasers try to buy a property tha up to 200 m from the motorway, it is to reveal in response to purchasers' solicitors' searches that motorway widening scheme is envisaged. That make virtually impossible for anyone living between 67 200 m to sell his property.

There has been created what amounts to an invisi Berlin wall on both sides of the relevant section motorway in my constituency. Those who live 67 m fr the motorway have the freedom to move. They are p the full value of their house and they can bank their chec and go and buy elsewhere. On the other side of invisible wall, just beyond the 67 m line, people are una to sell their major asset. They are unable to realise the ca value of their homes. They are effectively imprisoned trapped within their homes while the uncertai continues.

The Department interprets the 67 m limit with extre and total strictness. I know of instances where there i semi-detached property and the Department of Transpo has bought out one half of it under the blight not procedure but refuses to buy out the other half becaus is a fractional distance beyond the 67 m line. I should grateful to my hon. Friend if he would examine the fairn of the 67 m line.

I have carried out some research with the great aid the Library. The origins of the 67 m line are interestin Apparently they go back to a limit of 220 ft—my ho Friend will say immediately that 220 ft is the equivalent 67 m—which is the limit that is provided in section 2 of t Restriction of Ribbon Development Act 1935. The Seco Reading of that measure was moved by Mr. Hore-Belis of pedestrian crossing fame. That is the origin of the 67 line. My hon. Friend will be the first to appreciate that 1935 we were barely into building dual-carriageway Motorways had not even been thought of—they we some 20 years away—let alone four-lane motorways each direction, as is proposed for my area.

The 67 m line is an anachronism. It is unfair for anoth reason—it is measured not from the edge of the motorwa —which it should be so that the width of the motorway taken into account—but from the centre line, so that th wider the road, the more traffic on the road, and th greater the noise and disturbance, the smaller is the lar area within which people can serve blight notices. My ho Friend and our right hon. Friend should urgently consid the sense of the 67 m blight line for such major roa schemes. I am happy to tell my hon. Friend that it wi require only a minor decision by his Department to chang the blight line for this or, indeed, other schemes. Happil our right hon. Friend has powers under paragrap 15(1)(b) of the Town and Country Planning Gener

[Sir John Stanley]

Development Order 1988 to vary the 67 m distance. I urge my right hon. Friend to do that rapidly for this and for comparable schemes.

Can my hon. Friend tell me whether there is possible help on the way for my constituents, who are effectively unable to sell their houses and move beyond the blight line, in the Planning and Compensation Bill that has just been introduced in another place? In particular, is my understanding of clause 51 correct, that is, that it will extend the discretionary powers of the Department to buy properties by voluntary agreement if they would be seriously affected by new roadworks? If that is so, it could be of some help.

Can my hon. Friend confirm whether what our right hon. Friend said in a letter to me on 29 March about the timing of the operation of those enlarged discretionary powers still holds good? He said:

> "It was intended that these powers would be available once the line of the road had been announced: in the context of this section of the M20 this means when we publicise our decisions on how the widening is intended to be carried out."

If that undertaking holds good, I hope that my hon. Friend can confirm that when the detailed scheme is publicised next year, it will be possible to operate clause 51 of the Planning and Compensation Bill and give those who are seriously affected by the scheme, but beyond the 67 m blight line, the opportunity to have their houses purchased by the Department.

I want to raise the issue of the management of the considerable number of houses within the 67 m blight line that have now been acquired by the Department. They number about 250, and more may come into the Department's ownership. I understand that the houses will be managed by the North British Housing Association. I have nothing against that association; indeed, I remember that when I was Minister for Housing it was a good association and I visited a number of its schemes in different parts of the country. The local view, and it is my initial view, is that the role of that association in managing the properties is both unnecessary and probably undesirable. It is unnecessary because a better alternative is available to the Department of Transport, and it is undesirable because the association will not, I believe, give the same local priority in allocating the properties for short-term renting as would the arrangements that I shall outline.

Tonbridge and Malling borough council is interested in managing about one quarter of the properties for its own social housing needs. The remaining three quarters would be better managed on commercial terms by local estate agents. I believe that approaches have been made to national estate agents, but in his latest letter to me, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State says that no approaches have been made locally. In anticipation of this debate, Tonbridge and Malling borough council this week approached the area's eight largest estate agents. I shall give my hon. Friend the details after the debate, but seven of those estate agents said that they would be very interested in managing the properties on behalf of the Department of Transport.

Whether the properties are ultimately managed by estate agents or the North British Housing Association, I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will give a clear assurance that the terms under which the properties are managed will not result in a statutory rehous falling on Tonbridge and Malling borough the properties are eventually vacated and Department, when the widening scheme is hope that my hon. Friend agrees that it wo unfair to local inhabitants who may h considerable number of years on the authority's waiting list to be displaced by a of people who want to occupy on a short- properties acquired by the Department.

2.46 pm

The Minister for Roads and Traffic (Mr Chope): My right hon. Friend the Member and Malling (Sir J. Stanley) has used the provided by his Adjournment debate to ra importance to those of his constituents af Department of Transport's plans to wid between junctions 3 and 5. As he acknowle advent of the Channel tunnel and of the sin market, the M20 will become a motorway of significance. It is therefore imperative that taken to upgrade and widen the section in the existing dual three lanes to dual four l forecast demand well into the next century.

I will bring the House up to date with improvements to the M20/A20 route. Const "missing link" between Maidstone and Ashf well under way and is due for completion n decision to proceed with the widening of the junctions 5 and 8 following a public announced earlier this week. Work is due summer for completion in mid-1993, in opening of the Channel tunnel.

The proposed new A20 route between Fo Dover is also due for completion by the tunnel is opened. Together with the propose the M20 between junctions 3 and 5, those i will provide the main high-quality road ar link Dover, Folkestone and the tunnel with t London, and the rest of the United Kingdo

My right hon. Friend asked about the announce the proposed form of the wide junctions 3 and 5. The addition of that schem programme was announced in the May 1989 "Roads for Prosperity." As my right hon. consulting engineers were appointed in Oct identify options for achieving widening. T studying the matter in detail, and are making describe as good progress. However, it is fa the scheme is a lot more complicated th expected. Notwithstanding that, I hope th possible to make an announcement about it b I know that my right hon. Friend will not be the vagueness of that commitment, but I as I will do all in my power to monitor the sit will bring him up to date on the rate of pro as possible.

I recognise the concern felt by many of m Friend's constituents about several asp Department's acquisition policy for prope alongside the existing road and the arrange subsequent management. I should like to rationale behind the rules governing pla acquisitions. However one frames the rules,

cases that fall just outside them. Under the current powers and policies, before the Department can acquire, a genuine possibility must exist that the property will be required for the roadworks at some stage. If a totally unrestricted acquisition policy were to operate, distress and hardship would be spread over an unacceptably wide area. It would mean acquiring property which there was no prospect of our needing for roadworks. The Department could not justify the use of scarce public funds for that purpose.

My right hon. Friend rightly drew attention to the draft legislation in the Planning and Compensation Bill. If enacted, it would confer a discretionary power of acquisition which, prima facie, would not specify any distance limit. No criteria have been established to define how that discretion would be exercised. Much will depend on the degree to which we are successful in curtailing the adverse effects of the M20 in its widened form in my right hon. Friend's constituency.

I note the point that my right hon. Friend made about the power of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to vary the existing order and his point about origins, to which the House listened with interest. In about 1935, the first purpose-built bypass—the Winchester bypass—was constructed. When one considers the point that my right hon. Friend made, one realises that since then times have changed significantly.

I appreciate and share my right hon. Friend's concern about the length of time for which some houses under blight remain empty. Unnecessarily vacant properties cannot and should not be tolerated. My right hon. Friend's distinguished record when he was Minister for Housing made a substantial impact on that problem, particularly in the local authority sector. Much has since been done to reduce the number of empty Government-owned properties. I assure my right hon. Friend that I am not complacent about this. Indeed, one of my first actions on becoming Minister for Roads and Traffic was to give extra priority within the Department for making the best use of its properties. I shall have my right hon. Friend's points considered with a view to making further procedural changes.

My right hon. Friend is a little concerned about the role of the North British Housing Association in property management. I hope that I can assure him that local housing authorities were carefully considered when the Department decided on its contracting-out arrangements. It was decided that it would not be appropriate to use local authorities and the possible use of private firms of estate agents was our first line of inquiry. Local branches were not approached directly, but their interest was assessed through their offices at national level. On that basis, none could offer the type of agency that we required.

It seems that my right hon. Friend is saying that that was a mistake by the Department and that it should have contacted local offices. Given what he said about local interest, I look forward to receiving the details that he mentioned.

Housing associations were invited to tender the services against a form of contract. In the event, t NBHA was the only housing association to tender. On t section of the M20 between junctions 3 and 5, we have, date, acquired 92 properties under the blight provision and a further 136 are in the process of acquisition.

I confirm our intention that those properties will b made available to people living in mid or west Kent. I d not expect the NBHA to operate a priority scheme, b local people should have the advantage of being on th spot and of being able to keep in close contact with th NBHA about availability. As all its tenants to date a nominees of Tonbridge and Malling borough counci there does not appear to be a problem. I understand tha a batch of properties available at higher market rents ha been advertised in this week's *Kent Messenger*. I hope tha that will ensure that some of them are occupied soon. assure my right hon. Friend that I shall take a personal interest in ensuring that the properties are brought bac into use as quickly as possible. From my correspondence I am well aware of the anxiety caused to people living i properties next door to houses which become empty and i some circumstances squatted or vandalised.

I assure my right hon. Friend that our tenancy agreements do not place a statutory rehousing obligation on the local authority when the Department's properties are required back for sale or demolition. That should be welcome news in the light of what he said.

I accept that there have been teething troubles with the NBHA, partly due to the way in which it interpreted the managing agreement as permitting it to limit its choice o tenants to those in housing need and to let the properties at rents well below an economic market level. The number of properties which have been acquired was much higher than originally envisaged. We are reviewing the position with the NBHA and during the review the letting of properties was suspended. We are going ahead with advertising and I hope that the properties will soon be occupied.

I hope that I have dealt with many of my right hon. Friend's points.

Sir John Stanley: Before my hon. Friend sits down, will he return to my point about the 67m line? I hope that he agrees that what I said bears further consideration. I hoped that he would assure me that he and the Secretary of State would consider carefully what I said about the possible use of the powers that are available to him under the general development order. Will he consider whether it would be appropriate to change the 67m distance in the context of the four-lane motorway scheme? I do not expect him to make a commitment from the Dispatch Box on that issue, but I hope that he will agree to consider it and discuss it with my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Chope: I shall certainly do so. I am sorry if I did not make that clear in my initial response.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at three minutes to Three o'clock.

House of Commons

Monday 26 November 1990

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

TRANSPORT

Trust Ports

1. **Mr. Hague:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress he has made in respect of his plans to allow trust ports to move into the private sector.

11. **Mr. Irvine:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress he has made in respect of his plans to enable trust ports to be privatised.

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Cecil Parkinson): I believe that we should now build on the resounding success of the abolition of the dock labour scheme. To open up the ports industry further to market forces I want to see the main trust ports transfer into private ownership. I therefore intend to introduce a Bill in the current Session to allow trust ports to move into the private sector without the need to promote private legislation.

Mr. Hague: Will my right hon. Friend accept a strong welcome from Conservative Members for the enabling legislation that he is proposing? Will he join me in congratulating Tees and Hartlepool port authority on having been one of the first to put a Bill before the House, paving the way for others? Does he agree that the extension of private ownership to the trust ports represents a tremendous expansion of the business opportunities available to them?

Mr. Parkinson: Yes, I do. The present constitution of the trusts ports inhibits their development. The sooner they have a proper structure and are in the private sector, the better they will be able to develop, expand, create jobs and aid industry.

Mr. Irvine: May I urge upon my right hon. Friend the importance of ensuring that when trust ports are privatised provision is made to allow dock workers and other port employees to obtain shares on favourable terms? That would do a great deal to make privatisation of the trust ports popular with those who work in them.

Mr. Parkinson: The Bill will encourage trust ports to come forward with their own schemes for privatisation. We shall have to approve those schemes; an important part of any scheme will be giving dock workers an opportunity to own shares in the ports in which they work. That has been a tremendous success in the case of Associated British Ports and it will be in others.

Mr. Harry Barnes: What will happen to the disgusting Tees and Hartlepool Port Authority Bill, which has created a lot of trouble in the House and led to the introduction of this measure? The interesting question is: how far can we trust trusts if measures such as this are to be introduced? And what implications are there for the national health service?

Mr. Parkinson: The only disgusting feature of that Bill was the mindless opposition to it by Opposition Members, including the hon. Gentleman. Even the hon. Gentleman's stretched imagination is roaming a bit far if it brings the health service into this question.

Mr. Ward: My right hon. Friend will be aware that the port of Poole is a trust port in an area of great environmental beauty and sensitivity. Will he assure me that he will consult local authorities and other bodies before bringing in any element of compulsion in connection with privatisation that might put the environment at risk?

Mr. Parkinson: There will be no change in the environmental regulations governing ports and there will be no relaxation of standards. An important part of any proposals will have to be the protection of those environmental concerns—but I shall take my hon. Friend's point into account.

Ms. Walley: Why did not the Secretary of State tell us anything about the Treasury? Are not the proposals really all about asset-stripping the land and taking the money into the Treasury? How much money does he intend to raise from that? How can he reconcile the proposal with the special responsibility that trust ports have towards the local community and, more importantly, to the local economy, with an integrated transport system?

Mr. Parkinson: I welcome the hon. Lady to the Opposition Front Bench and congratulate her on already setting a standard that her colleagues have never managed to attain. The measure is being promoted so that trust ports, which have very ancient constitutions and whose development is presently hampered, can get on with the business of being the modern ports that they are capable of being, now that we have got rid of the dock labour scheme. The Treasury share is incidental.

Rail Electrification

3. **Sir Anthony Meyer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the current rail electrification programme.

The Minister for Public Transport (Mr. Roger Freeman): British Rail is making good progress with its electrification programme. The electrification of the east coast main line will be completed in late spring next year, and other projects such as Tonbridge-Redhill and Birmingham cross-city are being implemented.

Sir Anthony Meyer: Does my hon. Friend think that British Rail is responding with the necessary courage and imagination to the challenge and opportunities of the channel tunnel and 1992? In particular, is it considering the ultimate necessity for an electrified link all the way via north Wales to Ireland?

Mr. Freeman: I shall take the latter point first. It is for British Rail to come forward with investment propositions. We shall certainly look at InterCity propositions that are presented as being financially viable. The French Minister responsible for transport, to whom I recently spoke, said that when French railways appraises inter-city trains, it uses exactly the same basis as we use—the 8 per cent. financial rate of return. British Rail will invest some £1·4 billion to prepare this country for the opening of the channel tunnel. When it brings forward proposals for a high-speed rail link, the Government will look at them favourably, constructively and urgently.

Mr. Anderson: Is the Minister seriously saying that, for example, on the Paris to Strasbourg TGV route, French railways is employing the same restrictive criteria as British Rail? Surely it is the Government who are responsible for regional policy and who should therefore look at ways in which regional rail investment can be fitted into overall regional policy. Will the Minister look as positively as French railways at areas such as the south Wales route for electrification, to ensure that Britain can benefit from the channel tunnel?

Mr. Freeman: I confirm what I said earlier about the attitude and approach of French railways and the French Ministry of Transport to the provision of rail services between capitals. In terms of the basis of proposals for provincial services, the hon. Gentleman may know that only 50 per cent. of total rail investment over the next three years has had to meet the 8 per cent. real rate of return test. The other 50 per cent. has been justified for largely non-financial reasons. That is to say, it takes into account the benefits to non-users and, certainly, the economic and social benefits to the cities, regions and towns that such rail projects serve.

Sir Marcus Fox: In thanking my hon. Friend for his answer, may I tell him that there will be despair not just among my constituents but among those throughout the Bradford metropolitan area and all hon. Members involved if electrification stops at Leeds? If one city has benefited under the Government it is Bradford, and we need electrification to encourage the further development of a thriving economy.

Mr. Freeman: I am happy to confirm to my hon. Friend that the Government will reserve the appropriate resources to permit the electrification of the railway line between Leeds and Bradford and between Skipton and Ilkley. I am happy to confirm the electrification to my hon. Friend and to others who have pressed me on it—my hon. Friends the Members for Pudsey (Sir G. Shaw), for Keighley (Mr. Waller) and for Batley and Spen (Mrs. Peacock), and the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer), who is not in his place.

Mr. Speaker: Ms. Ruddock.

Ms. Ruddock *indicated dissent.*

Hon. Members: What about me?

Mr. Speaker: Then I definitely call Mr. Robert Hughes.

Mr. Robert Hughes: Will the Minister please get his facts right? The east coast main line electrification will not be completed at the time that he states, because it goes only as far as Edinburgh. There can be no confidence either in British Rail or in the Government if they persist with such misinformation, especially when British Rail is cutting services and seems to be about to cut freight services to Aberdeen.

Mr. Freeman: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his welcome for the advent of the electrification of the east coast main line to Edinburgh. That will cut substantially the journey time between London and Edinburgh. As I have told the hon. Gentleman before, it is for British Rail to present a case on the extension of the electrification of the line to Aberdeen. We shall look carefully at any case that it presents, but InterCity services must meet the test that I outlined of an 8 per cent. real rate of return. We shall look at other factors, including regional and social benefits and alleviation of congestion for services other than those that we call the commercial railway, and take them into account.

Regional Airports

4. **Mr. Viggers:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what measures are being taken to open up more transatlantic services from United Kingdom regional airports.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Patrick McLoughlin): The Government recognise the importance of regional airports. An agreement was reached in June, which provided new opportunities for transatlantic services from regional airports. Official talks are to start tomorrow in Washington on the prospects for further liberalising the United Kingdom—United States aviation relationship on transatlantic services. That could open the way for any suitable United Kingdom airport to be used.

Mr. Viggers: Does my hon. Friend agree that good transatlantic links can be of considerable importance in opening up regional centres such as Manchester and Birmingham for commercial and industrial development? My hon. Friend has been most successful in that so far. Will he continue with it? Will he confirm that that is not a substitute for further airport capacity in the south-east of England?

Mr. McLoughlin: I agree with my hon. Friend about the importance for the regions of transatlantic services. It is thanks to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State that in June we managed to get the agreement that made a significant advance. We intend to build on that in the talks that start tomorrow. I understand what my hon. Friend said about additional capacity in the south-east. A report on that was published last year, which we are studying and working on.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Does the Minister agree that much of the increased congestion at Heathrow is caused by people from other parts of the United Kingdom being brought in on shuttle flights so that they can then fly on to the United States? Would not it be better and quicker if the flights went direct from places such as Manchester to the United States? Would not that avoid some of the congestion in the south-east and bring the necessary investment to the Greater Manchester area that we all want?

Mr. McLoughlin: I agree with the hon. Gentleman, and I should go further and say that it is important that we

concentrate on developing regional airports. Much of what can be done by regional airports, such as attracting the airlines and showing that the business is there, is in their own hands. Regional airports such as Manchester have done that and I congratulate it.

Mr. Ashby: Does my hon. Friend understand that regional airports will not benefit from the opening up of transatlantic or any other services unless and until they are properly privatised? Will my hon. Friend give an undertaking that the local authorities will be made to divest themselves of ownership of those regional airports, so that the airports can expand and take advantage of the opening up of air travel in the 1990s?

Hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. McLoughlin: My hon. Friend makes a forceful point, which found sympathy with a number of my colleagues. Some regional airports have gone into private ownership. Perhaps it will surprise most hon. Members to know that one of the first was Liverpool. We welcome that and hope that others will follow that example.

Mr. Snape: What encouragement are the Government giving regional airports to develop transatlantic services? Is not it strange that British Airways, although not wanting to operate such services, invariably objects to foreign airlines doing so? Will the Minister comment on the fact that British Airways in the private sector rarely welcomes the competition that it regularly and publicly espouses? Is there any evidence that ownership of the airports has been anything other than beneficial to local authorities and poll tax payers, who have contributed to the airports?

Mr. McLoughlin: Regional airports have grown because of the economic benefits offered by the Government. Ten years ago, regional airports were not making any money and were not providing services for their localities. The liberalisation of air services, to which the Government are committed, has led to the expansion of regional airports and we are proud of that.

Mr. Colvin: Does my hon. Friend appreciate that, with regard to the Washington talks, the Government's ability to resist pressures from the United States to get something for nothing will result in our airlines being able to compete fairly across the north Atlantic? Will my hon. Friend guarantee that there will be no concessions on our fifth freedom or cabotage rights this side of the Atlantic without the Americans playing the game and giving us similar rights in America? Would not the current GATT round of talks be a good forum in which the lowering of that protectionist barrier might be achieved?

Mr. McLoughlin: My hon. Friend makes a good point. I assure him that the talks that start tomorrow are designed to bring liberalisation, which will give opportunities for United Kingdom and other airlines. We are determined to give those equal opportunities and to make sure that United Kingdom airlines do not suffer or lose out in the negotiations.

British Rail Staff

5. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he next expects to meet the chairman of British Rail to discuss wages and conditions of British Rail staff; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Parkinson: I discuss a variety of railway matters at my regular meetings with the chairman of British Rail. Wages and conditions of BR staff are primarily matters for British Rail management.

Mr. Skinner: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that it is nothing short of a scandal for Sir Bob Reid to receive £200,000 a year—an increase of £88,000 on the salary of the previous chair—when the basic rate for railway workers is £115·10 a week? Why did the management last year receive a 15 per cent. increase across the board, yet the railway workers got a miserly 8 per cent? Why will not the right hon. Gentleman give a guarantee now—some of his colleagues are throwing around promises—that railway workers will be treated in the same way as the management? Let us have no more of these double standards.

Mr. Parkinson: The new chairman of British Rail is one of the outstanding managers in Britain. To accept the job, he took a substantial reduction in salary compared with the salaries offered to him in other jobs. As the hon. Gentleman knows, those 15 per cent. increases were all individually negotiated contracts and were based on performance-related pay. Will the hon. Gentleman use his trade union connections to encourage the unions to start thinking in a modern way and to adopt shorter, more flexible hours and co-operate with the management, so that they can be better paid and work fewer hours?

Mr. Gregory: Does my right hon. Friend agree that there is a pent-up feeling in the railway work force, particularly in great centres such as York, that the work force would like to share in any possible equity participation? The fruits of their endeavours would come through in share ownership. At the next meeting with the chairman of British Rail, will my right hon. Friend look actively at that possibility, which would reduce the demand on wages and hence the pressure on freight and commuter users?

Mr. Parkinson: As the House knows, we are determined to privatise British Rail. As part of that privatisation, we shall make sure that the employees have shareholdings. I am sure that the House is aware that in every privatisation, the trade union leaders opposed privatisation and then urged their members not to take shares. However, 95 per cent. of their members, on average, chose to ignore their advice. I am sure that it will be the same with British Rail.

Mr. Prescott: In view of the connection made by the Hidden inquiry on the Clapham tragedy between the excessive working conditions of the workers and the cause of that tragedy, can the Secretary of State tell us whether he now accepts that the Government's financial policy contributed to that problem? Does he accept that his inspectors should be prosecuting not only British Rail but the Government?

Mr. Parkinson: I heard the hon. Gentleman's half-baked suggestion when the announcement of the prosecution was made. I am sure that he will remember, as

he studies those matters carefully, that in their evidence to Hidden both the chairman and the finance director said that they had adequate finance available—

Mr. Prescott: But they were wrong.

Mr. Parkinson: May I remind the hon. Gentleman that the accident arose from additional new investment in signalling that was badly carried out? The hon. Gentleman may not have noticed that British Rail recently came forward with a package offering shorter hours, higher pay and more flexibility. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will encourage the unions to accept that package—they are refusing to do so at the moment.

Roads Programme

7. **Sir Hal Miller:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether there have been any changes since the last announcement on the roads programme intended either to reduce the expenditure or prolong the construction periods in that programme.

The Minister for Roads and Traffic (Mr. Christopher Chope): No, Sir. This year's public expenditure settlement provided additional resources sufficient to maintain the programme already announced.

Sir Hal Miller: Does my hon. Friend agree that that confirmation should be welcome news to the groups that have expressed concern, on environmental grounds, about the noise and vibration from heavy traffic in our towns and villages and to those who are concerned about the reduction in road safety standards? Does he further agree that the programme will provide the means to avoid congestion, which wastes fuel and negatives the use of catalytic converters?

Mr. Chope: I very much agree with my hon. Friend. Investment in new roads ensures that congestion is relieved in the areas where it is most environmentally unsuitable to have through traffic. That is why the Government are proud of their record of 100 new bypasses and a massive road-building programme. Alone of all the political parties, the Conservative party is committed to further investment in Britain's road network.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: My hon. Friend will be aware of my concern about the prolongation of the agony of decision making. Is he also aware that my constituents have been waiting since 1971 for the decision to build a fast, safe, dual road from the motorway to the city of Nottingham? My hon. Friend has before him a viable, widely supported plan, which has been put to him by the local Member of Parliament. Will he make a decision and get on with it?

Mr. Chope: It will not be long before the decision is made. I am not sure whether my hon. Friend would have been too pleased if what he thought to be a wrong decision had been made.

British Rail

8. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many new trains British Rail has on order.

Mr. Parkinson: British Rail has on order, for delivery up to 1994, 787 coaches for electric trains, 630 coaches for diesel trains, 15 channel tunnel train sets and about 170 locomotives.

Mr. Arnold: Is my right hon. Friend aware that my constituents are fed up with the cattle truck conditions that they suffer when commuting to London? Is he further aware that they are looking forward to the introduction of the Networker trains, which will do a great deal to help? When can my constituents expect that relief to be on track?

Mr. Parkinson: The north Kent line is undergoing a modernisation programme costing more than £467 million. Some 63 stations will be lengthened to take 12-coach trains and the most modern commuter trains running in Europe will be introduced on the line next September. There will be brand-new signalling along the whole of the line and a new maintenance depot to ensure that the new equipment is properly maintained. Huge investment is taking place, which is good news for my hon. Friend's constituents.

Mr. Dalyell: Will the Secretary of State ask his officials to give him a report on the quality of the stock available on the Edinburgh-Linlithgow-Dunblane line?

Mr. Parkinson: Yes, I shall do that for the hon. Gentleman. I spent the day with ScotRail a week last Friday and I was very impressed with the new service between Edinburgh and Glasgow, which has the new 158 trains that are air conditioned, fast, clean and reliable. I was also impressed with the service on the Bathgate line, which has been reopened. I shall give the hon. Gentleman the answer to his question.

Mr. Higgins: Should not my right hon. Friend be congratulated on his success in obtaining money from the Treasury—not only last year, but in the autumn statement this year—hugely to increase investment in British Rail and elsewhere in the transport system? Will he ensure that publicity is given to the sort of information that he has just provided, not least that on the new terminuses in London that are being greatly improved, so that the travelling public will know that improvements are on the way?

Mr. Parkinson: I am pleased to confirm that there is more than £7,000 million in the programme for investment in public transport, both rail and underground, for the three years beginning next April. That is in addition to the record programmes now under way.

Mr. Prescott: Is the Secretary of State aware of the statement made recently by the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) that he intends to devote far greater resources to railway investment, even at the expansion of a reduction in tax? As that is clearly at odds with what the Secretary of State has told the House, is not it time that the right hon. Gentleman accepted my suggestion that he should resign, before he is sacked in three days' time?

Mr. Parkinson: The hon. Gentleman's English is matched only by his powers of logic.

9. **Mr. Rowe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on investment in British Rail.

Mr. Freeman: As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said, we have provided for up to £4 billion of investment by British Rail over the next three years—the highest level for 30 years in real terms. Of that, £1·4 billion is for channel tunnel services and £1·3 billion for Network SouthEast.

Mr. Rowe: My hon. Friend deserves congratulations on his Department's provision of that huge amount of money. He recently saw for himself the enormous cost, in environmental and money terms, that is carried by Kent because of the colossal increase in the number of lorry movements in the country. When he examines British Rail's investment programme, will he take into the mathematics the cost savings in the road programme if he encouraged British Rail to make more sensible plans for carrying freight on the railways?

Mr. Freeman: I agree with my hon. Friend's sentiments. We must encourage the transportation of as much freight as can sensibly be carried by rail. We expect to make an announcement after Christmas that will bring together the various strands of British Rail and Department policy on freight. Sir Fred Holliday, a member of the British Rail board, is conducting a study of the environmental impact of channel tunnel rail services and we expect him to report next spring. I am sure that my hon. Friend will be interested to learn that. W. S. Atkins, an independent consultancy, will review the processes by which British Rail will reach a conclusion next spring on the right route for the high-speed rail link into London.

Dr. Marek: The Minister said that he would welcome an application from British Rail for electrification of the Crewe to Holyhead line. However, he must realise that British Rail will not apply, because, although European money is available, the Secretary of State would deduct it from grant that British Rail might be given for investment elsewhere. Money is available, uniquely, for the Crewe to Holyhead line, which would serve a development area and offer a direct international connection between member states of the European Community. What encouragement can the Minister give British Rail to produce plans for the electrification of that line for the Department's consideration?

Mr. Freeman: Of course, we welcome any grant from the European transport fund, which this year stands at approximately £50 million, and which is expected to rise to £100 million next year. However, those sums are modest if one remembers that they are available for all 12 countries in the Community. Any grant, however small, is helpful and appreciated, but the European fund is by no means a panacea and will certainly not assist the hon. Gentleman in his promotion of a high-speed rail link from London to Scotland. Sufficient funds are not available now from the European transport fund and they will not be available.

Mr. Gale: Further to the earlier answer of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, does my hon. Friend share the concern about the north Kent line felt by Members of Parliament representing Kent constituencies? Will he confirm that British Rail investment will not only cover the inner-city area but will extend all the way down to Thanet?

Mr. Freeman: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I are very mindful of the need to improve services on the north Kent line. I hope to visit my hon. Friend's constituency shortly, to explore with him and to understand better his constituents' concerns, which he has represented clearly and forcefully. British Rail plans to make improvements to the line, but that will be done as resources are available.

Channel Tunnel

10. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on prospects for the channel tunnel fast link to London.

Mr. Freeman: British Rail is eager to proceed with the rail link to the channel tunnel as soon as it is a viable proposition. It is reviewing the options and expects to reach a conclusion on its preferred option next spring.

Mr. Banks: On behalf of myself and the London borough of Newham, may I thank the Minister for his visit to Stratford on Friday? What are his impressions following that visit? Will he give a clear public assurance that British Rail is seriously considering Stratford as the site for the international station for the channel tunnel? Will he also say that British Rail will publish the criteria that it has adopted for considering the options for the route linking Kent to London?

Mr. Freeman: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. I enjoyed my visit to Newham and Stratford terminal very much. Clearly it is an important intersection of lines for British Rail. The director of Network SouthEast gave the hon. Gentleman British Rail's commitment at that meeting—which I reinforce—that he will consider the prospects for redevelopment of the station straight away to improve facilities, which clearly need improvement, for the lines that currently run through Stratford.

As for Stratford being the location for the international station, that is for British Rail to evaluate. It was interesting for me to see the space available, but we must also note that, whichever route is chosen for passengers to come into London, it is important for them to arrive at a terminus in central London. British Rail made that plain. The Government understand that. In so far as the second terminal is to be King's Cross, the Government support British Rail. That is not inconsistent with a station at Stratford, but is nevertheless an important consideration.

Mr. Dunn: Is my hon. Friend aware that there is some misunderstanding about the timetable to be followed by the Department following the presentation to him of British Rail's proposals for the construction of a high-speed rail link through Kent? Can he place on record today the likely timetable to be followed, leading to the announcement of his Department's approval, or otherwise, for British Rail's proposals?

Mr. Freeman: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. British Rail has said that by next spring it will conclude its study of the alternative routes into London. The chairman of British Rail and its management have made plain their view that one needs a second terminal in central London,

and that it should be King's Cross—that is the subject of a Bill before Parliament. When British Rail has reached a conclusion—as I said earlier, independent consultants will review the process and I am sure that my hon. Friends will put questions about it at the appropriate time—it will place before my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport a proposal for the preferred route and the method of financing it. The Department will consider that as quickly as possible.

Mr. Leighton: Pending the decision to make Stratford the international interchange for the channel tunnel link, which would be a sensible decision, does the Minister recall sending me a letter earlier this year, stating that there would be immediate improvements to Stratford station —for example, making the lavatories work and painting the waiting room? His letter said that that work would be done by the end of the summer. Has he noticed the cold weather outside and the fact that the English summer has now ended? Can he give me a date when those promised improvements will take place?

Mr. Freeman: That is a matter for British Rail. I understand the hon. Gentleman's concern and that expressed by the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks). Improvements are needed to the station. Quite honestly, services and facilities there are not up to those that a major interchange station such as Stratford deserves. It will receive my personal attention.

Mr. Gerald Bowden: Will my hon. Friend reassure the House that the independent assessment of British Rail's and the private group's proposals for the channel tunnel rail link will be truly independent and objective? I am sure that he will be disturbed to learn that functionaries of British Rail are promoting the impression, in the Warwick gardens area of my constituency, that it is only a matter of time before British Rail's original proposals for Warwick gardens are carried out.

Mr. Freeman: There is no reason why my hon. Friend's constituents should jump to that conclusion. Distinguished independent consultants will thoroughly review the process to ensure that the logic, reasoning and rationale are sound and that the decision made is not only defensible by British Rail, the operator, but will command the widespread support of hon. Members.

Ms. Ruddock: Will the Minister admit that the choice of Upper Halling in west Kent—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hawling."] However it is pronounced—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not think that pronunciation matters too much.

Ms. Ruddock: With your permission, Mr. Speaker, I shall start again. Will the Minister admit that the choice of Upper Halling in west Kent on the safeguarded route prejudices the rest of the route? Will not the link pass through south-east London, unless he changes the criteria? Will he follow the advice of the European Commission and change the Treasury rules to allow for a mix of public and private money to finance the link in a way that will meet national, economic and environmental needs?

Mr. Freeman: I understood perfectly what the hon. Lady meant. The line that is safeguarded between Folkestone and the North Downs does not prejudice any of the three routes. It is a safeguarding procedure to prevent developments or construction along the line of th route that would be inconsistent with perhaps one or tw of the proposals. Whatever happens, it is certain that th route will pass through Ashford, and the Governmen have given a commitment to support Ashford station.

The Government have not ruled out public financing o a high-speed rail link—not a grant, but public financin —or a contribution from Network SouthEast to reflec improvements to commuter services in south-east Kent. high-speed rail link that serves commuters will brin benefits to those who live in the south-east and therefor higher fares and revenue to British Rail.

THE ARTS

Enhancement Fund

29. **Mrs. Golding:** To ask the Minister for the Ar what criteria he will employ when distributing his ne enhancement fund.

The Minister for the Arts (Mr. David Mellor): Th enhancement fund will help arts organisations to enhanc the quality of their output and management. I have aske the Arts Council to propose criteria that will achieve thos objectives.

Mrs. Golding: The Minister will be aware of the concer that the fund will not be used to help smaller region theatres. What reassurance can he give to theatres such the New Victoria theatre in my constituency, which ha operated for the past four years on a subsidy grant le than that agreed by the Arts Council?

Mr. Mellor: The hon. Lady will understand that I mea no disrespect to that theatre when I say that I cann comment specifically on it. The fund represents mone that were made available to meet the needs of the hou They are not confined to the great national companies b include the needs of local companies. I hope that the Ar Council will propose a range of uses of the enhanceme fund that will meet local and national needs.

Mr. Luce: May I congratulate my right hon. ar learned Friend and my right hon. Friend the Chi Secretary to the Treasury most warmly on the remarkable achievement in substantially increasing th overall amount of money for the arts which demonstrat the Government's continuing commitment to the art Will my right hon. and learned Friend clarify and make quite plain that one objective of the imaginati enhancement fund is to make it easier for the Arts Coun to channel more money to arts bodies that provide art the highest quality?

Mr. Mellor: My right hon. Friend is an extremely ha act to follow. This year's good settlement merely follo on from his tremendous efforts during his five years Minister for the Arts, culminating in last year's settlemer The aim of the enhancement fund is to enhance t activities of excellent companies. It is not confined companies that have run up deficits.

Mr. Maclennan: When the Minister first announced t enhancement fund he said that he would take a close lo at the proposals. Does his close look constitute a differe approach to the arm's length principle from that previous Ministers for the Arts?

Mr. Mellor: No, it certainly does not. In previous years my right hon. Friend the Member for Shoreham (Mr. Luce) very properly top-sliced certain sums of money for particular uses. For instance, there was an incentive fund of £5 million and my right hon. Friend made provision for an additional £3 million this year for different sorts of incentive schemes. Because of present needs, it is right that there should be an enhancement fund, but I do not propose to enter into the details of its distribution. If, however, I obtain money from the Treasury on the basis that there are needs to be met, I am entitled to examine whether those needs have been met.

I do not believe that the arm's-length principle means that Ministers should resemble the Frankenstein monster, although some may see a comparison, with life breathed into one in September to argue with the Treasury in October, to announce the provision of money in November and then to go back to sleep again in December for eight months. My duty is to ensure that the arts are safeguarded by the proper distribution of funds.

Mr. Cormack: I, too, congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend on an excellent settlement. May I thank him for his approach to arts matters? Will he confirm that both the Royal Shakespeare Company and the Royal Opera house will be eligible for further assistance from the fund?

Mr. Mellor: They will certainly be eligible, but we shall have to await the Arts Council's deliberations.

Appointments

30. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Minister for the Arts how many appointments he has personally approved since assuming his responsibilities as Minister for the Arts.

Mr. Mellor: Twelve, Sir. Seven were for the British Film Institute, including the reappointment of Sir Richard Attenborough as chairman. Four were for the Crafts Council. The other was for the British museum.

Mr. Banks: I am certain that the Minister has backed the winner in the leadership contest for the Conservative party. When the goodies are handed out, will he impress upon the new Prime Minister the need to have the Minister for the Arts in the Cabinet? The right hon. and learned Gentleman would enjoy that, and the arts world would benefit from it. Now that the lady has almost gone and we can talk freely among ourselves again, will he drop the absurd Thatcherite obsession with attacking local authorities? Will he make it clear that when he makes appointments to the regional arts boards he will keep up the number of local authority nominees?

Mr. Mellor: I had the winner yesterday afternoon. I hope that I have got the winner tomorrow as well. The status of the Minister for the Arts will be a matter for the new Prime Minister. As for appointments to the regional arts boards, I have had a number of constructive meetings with local authority representatives. Our wish is that there should be a strong local authority presence, nominated by local authorities, on the regional arts boards. The fact that one third of the places are reserved for local authorities is a sign of the importance that we attach to an arts funding partnership with the local authorities.

Mr. Jessel: As those appointed to arts bodies can make good use of the excellent increase in the funding obtained by my right hon. and learned Friend, may I, too, congratulate not only him but the whole of the Government team at the Treasury, led by my right hon. Friend the Member for Huntingdon (Mr. Major), the Chancellor of the Exchequer, because it is due partly to his support and firm encouragement that the arts are able to benefit in this way?

Mr. Mellor: I agree with my hon. Friend.

Mr. Fisher: On appointments, will the Minister confirm that every single regional arts association has written to him, protesting in the strongest possible terms against the proposal in his letter to the chairman of the Arts Council that he personally should appoint the chairs of the new regional arts boards? Does a single person or a single arts body support the Minister in this extraordinary centralist move? Will he withdraw it?

Mr. Mellor: The jury before which the proposals have to be judged is not composed of the regional associations as they are now constituted. We have to try to ensure, in accordance with various reports—including those of Committees of this House—that there is proper accountability for moneys that are spent. The money spent by the regional arts boards is overwhelmingly Treasury-obtained finance, although we also maintain a sense of regional ownership and the partnership with local authorities. The hon. Gentleman should await the deliberations of Tim Mason's committee, as I shall.

What is absolutely clear is that I will not shrink from establishing a framework that is, to my mind, consistent with ensuring that the bodies to be transferred—if, indeed, they are to be transferred; most do not want to be under the existing arrangements—can be reassured that the new structures will be strong enough to bear the weight of the evaluations needed for them. That is the important point. It has nothing to do with amour-propre and who appoints whom; it has to do with how we can best enhance the quality of artistic life in this country.

31. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will list all appointments made by him to arts bodies in the last year.

Mr. Mellor: Yes, Sir. I have arranged for the list to be published in the *Official Report*.

Mr. Corbyn: Does the Minister accept that much of this country's activity is ridiculously overcentralised and that it is time that we brought some democracy into arts appointments? Should not there be guaranteed places for local authority members appointed by their local authorities, rather than by the Minister? Does he further accept that the minority ethnic communities and user groups of arts centres and theatres should be able to appoint and elect people to arts authorities, rather than the Minister's sitting in splendid isolation in London deciding who should be the members of every regional arts authority?

Mr. Mellor: That prompts the large question, whether the quality of the people appointed in such a way would ultimately be any better. I am closer to the hon. Gentleman than he recognises. I have already proposed that one third of the membership of regional arts boards should be local authority representatives.

Mr. Corbyn: Answer the question.

Mr. Mellor: Hang on a minute. I am coming to that. I got the point the first time, although I do not always.

We are asking the local authority associations to find a way of proposing a mechanism so that they can determine who goes on to boards. I am anxious that there should a proper partnership with local authorities, with minimum amount of trouble and fuss.

Following is the information:

Institution	*Position*	*Name of Appointee*	*Appointed*
Advisory Committee on the Government Art Collection	Member	Mr. R. Shone	30 July 1990
Arts Council	Members	Ms. B. Anderson	1 April 1990
		Mr. E. Hall	1 April 1990
		Miss C. Mulholland	1 April 1990
		Professor Sir Alan T. Peacock	1 April 1990
		Sir Brian N. R. Rix	1 April 1990
		Mr. A. Smith	1 April 1990
		Professor C. St. John Wilson	1 April 1990
British Film Institute	Chairman Governors	Sir Richard S. Attenborough	1 October 1990
		Mrs. B. Anderson	1 October 1990
		Mr. T. Clarke	1 October 1990
		Ms. B. Ferris	1 October 1990
		Ms. P. Hoon	1 October 1990
		Mr. R. G. Hughes	1 October 1990
		Mr. A. Sapper	1 October 1990
British Library Board	Chairman	Commander L. M. Saunders-Watson	19 March 1990
	Members	The Lord Adrian	1 May 1990
		Professor A. J. Forty	1 April 1990
		Mr. D. A. E. R. Peake	1 July 1990
		Mr. R. E. Utiger	1 May 1990
British Museum	Trustee	Professor C. Renfrew	19 October 1990
Crafts Council	Members	Mr. A. H. Doggart	11 October 1990
		Mr. J. Jones	11 October 1990
		Mr. J. Newton	11 October 1990
		Professor D. Vaughan	11 October 1990
Greater Manchester Museum of Science and Industry	Chairman	Mr. A. Goldstone	27 January 1990
Library and Information Services Council	Members	Mr. S. A. Brewer	1 January 1990
		Sir Charles Chadwyck-Healey Bart	1 January 1990
		Councillor C. Heinitz	1 January 1990
		Mr. C. J. Koster	1 January 1990
		Mr. D. Leabeater	1 January 1990
		Mrs. S. I. Martin	1 January 1990
National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside	Trustees	Professor G. J. Davies	1 January 1990
		Mr. J. Entwistle	1 April 1990
		Mr. A. Swerdlow	1 April 1990
		Lady Vaizey	1 April 1990
Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art	Members	Mr. C. Jackson-Stops	1 August 1990
		Dr. J. I. R. Montagu	1 August 1990
		Mr. A. G. Reynolds	1 January 1990
South Bank Board	Chairman designate	Sir Brian Corby	11 June 1990
Theatres Trust	Chairman Trustees	Sir David L. Crouch	6 April 1990
		Mr. I. Albery	6 April 1990
		Baroness Birk	6 April 1990
		Mr. G. L. Harbottle	6 April 1990
		Mr. R. M. Marshall	6 April 1990

Private Sponsorship

32. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will make a statement about the growth in private sponsorship in the arts since 1983-84.

Mr. Mellor: Business sponsorship of the arts stands at over £30 million a year, more than doubl level in 1983-84. Much of this growth is due t Government's highly successful business sponso incentive scheme.

Mr. Marshall: Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that that dramatic increase is welcomed by everyone connected with the arts? Does he further accept that many Conservative Members prefer privately funded to publicly funded generosity?

Mr. Mellor: I hope that most of my hon. Friends—indeed, most Members of the House—believe that a balance must be struck. I appreciate that I will never convince at least one of my hon. Friends—I am more hopeful about others—that we want substantial private contributions, although I am firmly committed to a strong level of Government funding. I hope that that level will increase year on year, which is what we managed to achieve this year.

CIVIL SERVICE

Conditions of Service

39. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service when he last met civil service trade union leaders to discuss conditions of service.

The Minister of State, Privy Council Office (Mr. David Mellor): I have not yet met the civil service trade union leaders; I shall of course do so as and when necessary.

Mr. Skinner: If and when the Minister's friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, becomes Prime Minister and introduces his classless society, will he ensure that civil servants get an extra bonus for introducing Bills to carry through that classless society—Bills to abolish the honours list, the public schools, the House of Lords and the royal family, and retrospective legislation to get rid of all those knighthoods of the Tory Members who voted for the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine)?

Mr. Mellor: I shall ask my right hon. Friend to give that most careful consideration.

Mr. Bowis: I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend will find time to introduce a Bill to preserve the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner).

When my right hon. and learned Friend talks to the civil service will he make a point of discussing the opening hours of museums and galleries, especially at weekends, on bank holidays and in the evenings when families, particularly children, could visit them if they were open?

Mr. Mellor: That is a good point. Like my hon. Friend, I represent an inner London constituency where many people like to go to museums and galleries. Family times do not necessarily fit in with opening times. There is a difficult balance to be struck. Perhaps my hon. Friend would write to me in more detail about his opinions. I shall meet the directors of museums and galleries before Christmas and I should be interested in discussing his proposals with them.

Mr. Winnick: I am not as optimistic as my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) that if the Minister's favoured candidate becomes Prime Minister he will produce a classless society. Is there any opportunity of the people at GCHQ once again having the right to belong to a trade union if the Chancellor of the Exchequer becomes Prime Minister, or are we going to continue with the autocratic rule of the Thatcher years?

Mr. Mellor: We are going to continue with the common sense settlement that was reached a few years ago. There is absolutely no reason to reopen the matter.

Agencies

40. **Mr. David Martin:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service what further progress has been made towards the creation of agencies.

Mr. Mellor: Since I last reported to the House, the Government have published the first annual review of "next steps" agencies and the Government's response to the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee's third and very helpful report on "next steps".

Mr. Martin: Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that he will continue the sensible policy of his predecessor in making a top priority in the creation of any new agencies improved services to the general public, particularly as it is the general public who fund them?

Mr. Mellor: Just because it is not well known, people should not overlook the significance of the "next steps" development, which I have reason to hope is a bipartisan policy and not a matter of political controversy. It affects organisational changes not as ends in themselves, but towards better services to the public and better working conditions for people within the service, for whom the agency framework offers a much better quality of working life. We shall certainly proceed with that. We are determined to achieve our ambition of half the civil service being in "next steps" agencies by the end of 1991.

Dr. Marek: Whether the establishment of these agencies is a bipartisan policy depends on what the Government do. The Minister is certainly right that many things are not well known. It is important that standards of quality and service to the public are part of any agency programme. They must not fall below levels determined by the Minister. Can the Minister be helpful and make these things better known? Can he put them together and make all these standards of service available to the public in an effort to achieve greater awareness?

Mr. Mellor: That is a most helpful and constructive point. As the hon. Gentleman knows, the key basis for the agency relationship is that accountability to Ministers and Parliament is not lost. There is firm agreement between Ministers and the agencies about what should be achieved and about setting standards. The payment of performance-related pay to the heads of the agencies depends on their ability to deliver on those. That is of the essence and creates an incentive towards good and effective service, which may have been absent previously. I should be only too happy to consider the hon. Gentleman's remarks sympathetically. I am grateful to him for making it clear that this positive framework for change in the civil service is something in which he and his hon. Friends are happy to be involved.

Mr. Harry Greenway: Can my right hon. and learned Friend go one step further and say what financial and manpower savings, if any, are achieved by the agencification process rather than the current system?

Mr. Mellor: The principal aim is efficiency in the service to the public. In some circumstances that may yield

savings; in others, it would not. I shall be only too happy to let my hon. Friend know, from the records that we have, what the effect has been so far.

Natural History Museum

41. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service if he will make a statement on the latest representations he has received from the Institution of Professionals, Managers and Specialists about the staffing situation at the natural history museum.

Mr. Mellor: I have received a number of representations from the IPMS.

I understand that negotiations have continued between the natural history museum management and IPMS representatives, and I am glad to note that, on 20 November, an agreement was reached between them.

Mr. Dalyell: Should not the Minister transfer his affections from Chelsea football club and spend his Saturday afternoons up the road at the natural history museum? Will the IPMS be consulted about the disastrous proposal to reduce spending on library services at the museum by £80,000 to £100,000 in the coming year, given the loss that that will entail in terms of the serious scholarship that is so important to British science?

Mr. Mellor: When I watch a game I occasionally have the feeling that there are some stuffed animals on the pitch, although that was not the case yesterday.

I take seriously the hon. Gentleman's question about the natural history museum because I know that he is very interested in the matter. I have taken quite a lot of trouble to have meetings to discuss it. There will always be controversy about the balance to be struck between the resources applied to making the museum more accessible to the general public and those applied to keeping the collection accessible to scholars. I understand that. I can only say that, having had meetings with Sir Walter Bodmer, the director and others, I believe that the has genuinely and sincerely attempted to achi balance. Now that agreement has been reached, thing to do is to await the outcome.

I hope that the hon. Gentleman will be reas hear that the museum's bids for running costs n have been met in the settlement that I have bee make available. I hope that that will help to mai balance and to ensure that the museum can contin its important work. I appreciate that, exceptiona also amounts to a great deal of commitment to

Action on Race

42. **Mr. Robert G. Hughes:** To ask the Minist Civil Service if he will make a statement on the pr for "Action on Race".

Mr. Mellor: Departments and agencies are good progress in drawing up and implement individual action plans under the programme for race which my predecessor introduced in May

Mr. Hughes: Does my right hon. and learne agree that it is possible for selection and re procedures to be based on what is suitable Anglo-Saxon Protestants but that, given ou cultural population, we must adapt the way in recruit and select people to ensure genuine fa between people of different races?

Mr. Mellor: There is no doubt that we can a do a great deal more to recruit more represen ethnic minorities to the public service and, in par ensure that members of those minorities can o higher offices in that service. The typically well-c and far-sighted plan announced by my pred designed to achieve that, and I look forward to my hon. Friend's detailed comments on it.

Kuwait (Iraqi Withdrawal)

3.31 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"The imminent vote in the Security Council on the limit of time on Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait."

The matter is specific because the issue is no longer the "invasion of Kuwait" but whether outsiders have the right to intervene, even if such intervention involves misery on a scale that is out of all proportion to the initial outrage.

I have to persuade you, Mr. Speaker, that the matter is urgent. The crucial discussion in the UN is to take place on Thursday, and the hostages to whom my hon. Friend the Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms. Abbott) and others have referred, may prefer detention in Baghdad to the death from the sky which would be their certain fate if war broke out.

The matter is important, and important to the House, because we here must not indulge in courage by proxy. It costs those sitting on these green Benches little to make declarations to the effect that we must resist or that we must do this, that or the other in terms of a military option.

The high price of war will be paid by the country's youth, who were often reared in urban wastelands because there was "no money" to give them anything better. We have obligations to our service men. As national service tank crew and as one who for 21 months wore the emblem of the Desert Rats, I think that it is extremely important that the House shows those in service positions that we discuss what we propose to do.

This question has been repeatedly put and has equally repeatedly been unanswered: what on earth happens if more than one oilfield catches fire? There is only one Red Adair team. At least those questions should be answered before people start firing bullets and setting fire to oilfields.

There is also a matter which is personal to yourself, Mr. Speaker, as Speaker of the House. There are occasions when the two Front Benches are basically agreed on a course of action, rightly or wrongly. I believe that some of us, perhaps many of us on the Opposition Benches, do not share that consensus. Therefore, we rely on your judgment to form a view on whether there should be a debate on a matter of this kind. The Gulf is a matter of overwhelming importance and urgency. If it is not discussed on Tuesday, or, at the latest, Wednesday, it will be too late asnd decisions will then be made in the United Nations.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose o discussing a specific and important matter that he believe should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the imminent vote in the Security Council on the limit of tim on Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait."

I in no way underestimate what the hon. Gentleman ha said. However, as he knows, under Standing Order No. 20 I must announce my decisions without giving reasons t the House. I have listened with concern and care to th hon. Gentleman, but he knows that I must decide whethe his application comes within the Standing Order an whether it should take precedence over the business se down for today or for tomorrow. I regret that, in this case the matter does not meet the requirements of the Standin Order, and I cannot therefore today submit his applicatio to the House.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): On a point o order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Arising from the application unde Standing Order No. 20?

Mr. Winnick: Yes.

Mr. Speaker: Well, we cannot have points of orde arising out of that.

Mr. Winnick: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Wil you give guidance to the House? As it is clear that actio is likely to be taken on the diplomatic front, would it no be appropriate, as my hon. Friend the Member fo Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) suggested, for the House t debate the issue as quickly as possible? Obviously there ar many different and varied views in the House about th situation in the Gulf, and my view differs from that of m hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow. However, I believe that he has a valid point, although there are thos of us who believe that it may be necessary for militar action to be taken while others like my hon. Friend th Member for Linlithgow take the opposite point of view

In the face of the possibility of military conflict, i would be appropriate that there should be a debate on th matter in the House. Can you give the House any advic about such a debate? If you cannot grant one using you powers under Standing Order No. 20, can the Governmen be persuaded to have a debate in the near future?

Mr. Speaker: That is a very different matter. The hon Gentleman is aware that I have difficult decisions to tak in these matters. I weighed what the hon. Member fo Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) had to say with great care because I received his request to make the applicatio before 12 o'clock today. I have not turned down hi application lightly, and in no way do I underestimate th importance of the matter.

Fishing Vessel (Sinking)

3.39 pm

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will recall that the Minister of State for the Armed Forces made a statement on Friday about the tragic sinking of the fishing vessel Antares. Since then it has emerged that a trainee commander was in charge of the submarine that brought down the fishing vessel and that there was a very long delay in alerting the rescue services. As the Clyde fishermen are now threatening to blockade the Clyde unless action is taken to stop underwater submarine activities forthwith, have you had a request for a further statement from the Minister to correct the errors and omissions that were made on Friday and in view of the increased urgency of this particular matter?

Mr. Speaker: I have not had any such requests. As the hon. Gentleman knows, I granted a private notice question about this important matter on Friday. It may be true that certain further information has come to public notice since then, but an inquiry is to be held, and no doubt that will be taken into account at the time.

European Community Docum

3.40 pm

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): On order, Mr. Speaker. I wonder whether it is in House to consider the motion being prop Leader of the House that we should mak pursuant to Standing Order 102(2) in r European Community document. I have jus copy of Standing Orders from the Vote Standing Order 102(2) does not appear t matter.

I then consulted your excellent Clerks, who told me that there was a new Standing somewhere which had been agreed at the Session—indeed, I remember the deb Unfortunately, however, the Clerks did not and sent me to the Vote Office, where, sad to that there was no copy of the new Standing C it was being printed.

This is not a jocular issue—not a matte pick an argument. I hope that you, Mr. consider three aspects. First, the only rea motion has been tabled is that the Council meeting next week—that is why the docum switched from a Committee to the Floor of

Secondly, the meat of the motion is huge. put an end to the control on the possession internal borders—a vital issue.

Thirdly, in an explanatory note, responsible has said that this is an abuse of a majority voting——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentlem debate the matter. He must now allow m reasons for this.

The Standing Order was agreed to on 2

Mr. Taylor: I was there.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman say here, so he knows that it was agreed to b shall look into why the Standing Orders ha printed—they were sent to the printers im the debate. A similar motion was passed l part of our Standing Orders. I have Question——

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Is th around this——

Mr. Taylor: Mr. Speaker, I am not a tro a specific period of time has elapsed. I ca wording of the Standing Order; I cannot ob Vote Office; and under the Standing Orde we need to have the papers necessary to ta is possible to regard the whole matter a claim that it does not matter what papers the Government will get their business th but that is not what I came here for 25 ye entitled to the necessary papers for decisi

The Chief Whip will recall the Single through late on a Thursday. Now we are vital issue again late on a Thursday or ea Surely we should go through the proper p can we do that?

Mr. Speaker: Order. We are going through the right procedures. The matter has been passed by the House and it is part of our Standing Orders. I have no authority to do anything other than put the Question. The hon. Gentleman was here, and if he does not like the motion, he can vote against it now.

Mr. Skinner: There is a way around this. Notwithstanding the vote taken in a general form last week——

Mr. Speaker: Not last week—last month.

Mr. Skinner: Last month. I want to ask you to tell the Leader of the House that this procedure has been found wanting because the relevant information cannot be obtained from the Vote Office. This matter can be taken off the agenda and brought back when the information is available. All the Leader of the House has to do is to stop this nonsense continuing.

Mr. Speaker: The information is of course available——

Mr. Teddy Taylor: It is not.

Mr. Speaker: It was in *Hansard* at the time; it is certainly in the Table Office.

Mr. Taylor: I am sorry, Sir—this is not fair.

Mr. Speaker: Order! It is not a question of not being fair. It is a question of the House having passed the Standing Order. I have no authority to go against a decision of the House. The hon. Gentleman knows that——

Mr. Taylor: No.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I will read out the motion passed by the House on 24 October. It states:

"If a Motion that specified European Community documents as aforesaid shall not stand referred to a European Standing Committee is made by a Minister of the Crown at the commencement of public business, the Question thereon shall be put forthwith."

The hon. Gentleman can vote against that if he does not like it, but I have no authority other than to put that motion.

Mr. Taylor: I apologise for rising again, Mr. Speaker; this is my last intervention. There is no point in voting for or against. Our choice on the motion is either to discuss the directive in the early hours of Friday morning when no one will hear about it, or to put it to a Committee that is stuffed with people appointed by the Government. The issue here is that, under Standing Orders, the papers required for a debate must be in the hands of the House.

You, Mr. Speaker, are the only person who can protect us here. Why are those papers not available in the Vote Office? There is no point in voting on the motion because, either way, it will slip through and nobody will know about it, even though it is a vital issue. I simply say that papers should be available and that it is your duty to ensure that.

Mr. Speaker: Is the hon. Gentleman saying that European Document No. 8836/90 is not available?

Mr. Taylor: No—the Standing Order is not available.

Mr. Speaker: Well, I have explained to the hon. Gentleman that the Standing Order was passed by the House. The Speaker's hands are tied in matters of this kind. When the House passes a change in Standing Orders I am obliged to accept it. I must now put the Question.

Mr. Skinner: There is another point——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not need the hon. Gentleman's help, helpful though he always is.

Mr. Skinner: The Committees have not been formed.

Mr. Speaker: Please sit down.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 102(2) (Standing Committees on European Community Documents).

WEAPONS

That European Community Document No. 8836/90 relating to acquisition and possession of weapons shall not stand referred to European Standing Committee C.

The House divided: Ayes 164, Noes 19.

Division No. 10] **[3.46 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cormack, Patrick
Cran, James
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayward, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
Maclennan, Robert
McLoughlin, Patrick
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*

Moss, Malcolm
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowe, Andrew
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Squire, Robin
Stern, Michael
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Tracey, Richard
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Wallace, James
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilshire, David
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Sir George Young and
Mr. Tim Boswell.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Allen, Graham
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Bidwell, Sydney
Dalyell, Tam
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Hoyle, Doug
Lambie, David
Leighton, Ron
Livingstone, Ken
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Pendry, Tom
Redmond, Martin
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Teddy Taylor and
Mr. Dennis Skinner.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Orders of the D

Statutory Sick Pay B

Order for Second reading read.

3.59 pm

The Secretary of State for Social Secu Newton): I beg to move, That the Bill Second time.

As right hon. and hon. Members wi consists of only three clauses. The House welcome change from most of the social se Bills brought before it. In general, soci cover a wide variety of different social and their lengths are commensurate with however, is a one-subject Bill dealing arrangements under which employers recover, from their remittances of na contributions, the whole of the statutory pay out to their employees when they ar

As the House will recall—certainly th for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) and Ladywood (Ms Short) will—in my statement last month, I gave notice of adjust those arrangements as a contin building upon, the restructuring of the S undertook, to a modest extent, last year

Before coming to the detailed provisi might be helpful briefly to remind th background to and the origin of the SS hon. Members with lengthy memories— the Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen when the Government came to office in 1 sick pay cover during the 1970s had tak substantially to expand. However, the st it the ordinary social security system—w process some 10 million sickness benefit c the result that there was a significa sometimes even over-provision, between employers. Because sickness benefit was many employees were better off when work. It was against that background, measure of consent from both emp organisations, that the SSP scheme was

I doubt whether the House will wish long on the history of the SSP schem suspect one or two Opposition Member to point out that the scheme has be success story. When it began, there apprehension among employers and em impact. In the event, those fears proved especially after the inevitable initial pro with any substantial changes, had Employers quickly assimilated SSP into arrangements, and the vast majority of the scheme with very little difficulty. Pe its success could be gauged from the trade union movement—if I may put commented favourably on the imple scheme.

I acknowledge that smaller employ have less scope for developing expertise may sometimes find its operation more

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one reason why I had their interests especially in mind when developing the package, on which I shall elaborate later.

Mr. Michael Grylls (Surrey, North-West): Has my right hon. Friend had an opportunity to hold full consultations with all the small and medium-sized organisations? At a time when the Government are telling businesses generally that they must keep down their costs, for obvious reasons, and at a time of high interest rates, many of the small and medium-sized firms are in some difficulty. Has my right hon. Friend received any advice from the deregulation unit and from our hon. Friend the Minister with responsibility for small firms about their reaction to the Bill? I have heard a great deal of concern expressed because it is perceived that the Bill will add to costs at a difficult time. Will my right hon. Friend bear that in mind and tell the House what consultations he has had?

Mr. Newton: I will certainly bear in mind my hon. Friend's remarks, and I acknowledge the considerable part that he has played over many years—of which I have had personal experience in various ministerial positions and in other ways—in ensuring that the interests of small businesses in particular are taken fully into account. I hope that my hon. Friend will bear with me, because later in my speech I shall refer to parallel reductions in national insurance contributions, which are geared to take special account of the needs of smaller businesses. They may mean that some smaller employers—although not all, because it will depend to some extent on factors particular to certain businesses—whose employees are not highly paid, as is the case in many service industries, will find that reductions in national insurance contributions will leave them rather better off, taking the package as a whole, than at present.

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): I am sure that the Secretary of State would not want to mislead the House. He must be aware that the National Federation of Self Employed and Small Businesses is passionately angry about his proposals, feels that promises made in the past have been breached, and believes that the new measures will prove very destructive both to sick people and their businesses. That view is on the record. The right hon. Gentleman should not pretend that businesses welcome the legislation, because they certainly do not.

Mr. Newton: I did not make any such pretence. I sought to make a sensible and balanced response to my hon. Friend's intervention. Later in my speech, I shall give examples of the possible effect of the new system on a representative sample of small employers with a typical incidence of sickness, showing how they might gain from the reduction in national insurance contributions for employers, which are specially focused on lower earnings bands below £175 or £185 per week.

Mr. Anthony Nelson (Chichester): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that some representations were made before his uprating statement, in which he announced significant improvements in social security benefits that might put a different complexion on the representations made to him?

Mr. Newton: The representations to which the hon. Member for Ladywood referred were submitted before the federation had details of the reductions that were to take place in employers' national insurance contributions.

Ms. Short: But I have a copy of the federation's lett

Mr. Newton: The hon. Lady must be referring to la representations. Those I have seen were dated November, and it was not until 8 November, at the ti of the autumn statement, that I gave details of the natio insurance contributions re-rating proposals. The reducti for employers is rather larger in both percentage a absolute money terms than I indicated at the time of r original uprating statement. Once I had refined the det the final proposals were more generous than th signalled at the time that I announced the SSP proposa

It may be that certain interests have not yet been a to take into account, to the extent that I would obviou want them to do, the advantages to employers of t reductions that are to be made in national insuran contributions, which will total about £250 million—qu a significant sum, taken over all.

There is no doubt that the interests of small employe in particular should be taken into account, and I ha sought to do so. Considerable strides have been made recent years in improving the presentation of guidance statutory sick pay, which has done a great deal to incre understanding of the scheme among small employers particular. Moreover, the development of softw packages for those employers with computer payrolls- accept that this is not true of all employers, but it is t of a growing number—has further eased any operatio difficulties which may originally have been experienced

Earlier in my remarks, I referred to the growth occupational sick pay coverage which had occurred duri the 1970s. Since statutory sick pay was introduced in 19 and occupational sick pay coverage has continued to gro At first, coverage was more selective—that may eme later in the debate—and tended to apply to white col rather than to manual workers. Gradually, as t expansion of occupational sick pay schemes continu they have become more comprehensive.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): When t former Secretary of State, the right hon. Member f Sutton Coldfield (Sir N. Fowler) introduced the Soc Security and Housing Benefits Bill on 23 November 19 he said that the latest available estimate was that 90 p cent. of full-time employees were in some sort occupational sick pay scheme. I think that the lat estimate that the Minister has given was 91 per cent. after a survey done for his Department in 1988. From per cent. to 91 per cent. does not seem to be a gr increase in coverage.

Mr. Newton: Certainly the coverage of occupatio sick pay schemes is substantial. For example there h been a tendency to bring more part-time workers into su schemes and for schemes to provide more comprehens coverage. As a result, many of those groups who s sometimes adverted to as people who have missed out these developments, have been increasingly included.

As I was about to say—this is the point that the ho Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) w referring to—research carried out for the Department an independent organisation, IFF research, in 19 showed that about 20 million of the work force, or 91 p cent., as the hon. Gentleman said, work for employers w occupational sick pay schemes. As I have said on a numb of occasions, for example during the uprating——

Ms. Short *rose*——

Mr. Newton: May I finish the sentence before the hon. Lady intervenes again?

That figure reflects the fact that there is a growing acceptance by employers of their greater responsibility for covering short-term sickness among employees, which in my view is right and proper.

Ms. Short: We know that the Secretary of State chose the words in the uprating statement carefully—91 per cent. of the work force work for employers who provide some occupational cover. That does not mean that 90 per cent. of the work force are covered, as the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland should know. Most low-paid, part-time, short-term workers are not covered. Nearly half the workers in the private sector are not covered. To talk as though 90 per cent. are covered is misleading. At best, probably only half the population are covered.

Mr.Newton: I think that the hon. Lady will find that the figures are higher than that. I hope that I always choose my words carefully. I have no desire to mislead anyone. It is certainly the case that 91 per cent. of employees work for employers with occupational sick pay schemes. As I was seeking to tell the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland, in practice the schemes have become more comprehensive over the years, and fewer people are now excluded from them. That is the best assessment that we can make.

Mr. Michael Meacher (Oldham, West) *rose*——

Mr. Newton: I shall gladly give way to the hon. Gentleman, but first, it may be helpful if I complete the next part of my speech.

A particularly striking feature of the report—commissioned in 1988—is the growth in coverage in manual occupations. That has grown from 62 per cent. of employees in 1974 to 88 per cent. in 1988—only 5 per cent. behind coverage in non-manual grades, at 93 per cent. The report also indicates that the majority of schemes—83 per cent. in the private sector—top up SSP to full basic pay, and that, overall, nearly three quarters of all employees receive their full salary when sick. That is a very encouraging development, and it clearly demonstrates the extent to which employers have increasingly accepted responsibilities in the field of short-term sickness.

Mr. Meacher: The Bill is premised on the view that occupational sick pay is wide and is increasing. Will the right hon. Gentleman face up to the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short)—that 44 per cent. of private-sector schemes do not offer occupational sick pay and that 55 per cent. of private employers who employ fewer than 10 employees do not have an occupational sick pay scheme? The 90 per cent. figure that he keeps quoting is totally irrelevant and grossly misleading. Does he accept that there can be no justification for the Bill when that premise simply does not exist?

Mr. Newton: I do not accept that for a moment. The figure of 91 per cent. of employees working for employers who offer occupational sick pay schemes could not be said to be less than striking for almost any other sector. In some of the electoral matters with which the hon. Gentleman and I are concerned, 90 per cent. would be regarded as extremely high. Employers who do not offer what could be described as an occupational sick pay scheme may continue to pay employees for a significant time when they are sick.

Nothing that I have said could be described as misleading. If anything, the way in which the hon. Gentleman is trying to minimise employers' improved acceptance of their responsibilities on short-term sickness among their employees is far more misleading than anything that I have said.

Mr. John Battle (Leeds, West): I am grateful to the Secretary of State for giving way, because this point is crucial. If the Government are saying that they will change the basis of national insurance because 91 per cent. of people have cover, we must be clear about that figure, because we profoundly disagree with it. The only person covered by a workplace occupational sick pay scheme may be the managing director, and none of his workers may receive any benefit. A workplace may be covered, but not as many people as the Secretary of State is suggesting, on whom he is basing his argument.

Mr. Newton: I draw some encouragement from such a line of argument. If the hon. Gentleman can produce a significant number of examples—I am tempted to say, if he can produce one—of occupational sick pay schemes that are confined to the managing director, I might give some credence to his argument, but I doubt that he could find a single such scheme, let alone a significant number.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Is my right hon. Friend aware that, in agriculture for example, a sick pay scheme cannot be confined to one member but must be given to all members of staff?

Mr. Newton: I note what my hon. Friend says, and I am grateful to her. The trend has undoubtedly been towards wider coverage of groups who previously might not have been part of an occupational sick pay scheme, and we have borne that point in mind.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): This problem is of deep concern to me, as I represent a constituency which, because of the changes to industry, is now a small-firm economy. Has not the Secretary of State missed a golden opportunity to consider employers who employ fewer than 10 people and to give some real statistics? Let us have the truth. Like Labour Members, the right hon. Gentleman knows that many employees are not paid SSP when they should be. Has any research been conducted into how many employers do not pay SSP? The right hon. Gentleman's case is flawed, and there is little statistical evidence to back up this nasty little Bill.

Mr. Newton: Occasionally, as in every part of the social security system, the rules do not work perfectly. A great deal of effort was put into improving the guidance and assistance to employers to help them to operate the system. One aspect of the reimbursement arrangements does not work well. In some circumstances, employers fail to claim what theoretically they are able to claim. People have the right to go to the Department of Social Security if they feel that they are not receiving their full entitlement. In certain circumstances, the DSS will take steps to make sure that they do.

I do not pretend that the system works perfectly in all cases. I do not pretend, either, that the administration of the social security system, through the DSS, works

perfectly in all cases. It is incontrovertible, however, that the statutory sick pay scheme is working a great deal better than most Opposition Members forecast at the time that it was introduced. Moreover, it is working a great deal better than it did in the early days. It has settled down and, by and large, is working very well.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): This report, which was debated at some length during the proceedings on this year's Social Security Bill, has been thorougly discredited by the Government. It does not reach the conclusion that the Minister reaches. It states that the majority of occupational pension schemes are very poor compared with the statutory sick pay scheme. Only 19 per cent. of private sector schemes provide cover for the full six months. Many of the other private sector schemes exclude trainee workers. In such dangerous industries as mining and construction, where a statutory sick pay scheme is needed, fewer than 50 per cent. of firms offer any sick pay scheme whatsoever.

Mr. Newton: I have already said that occupational sick pay schemes are widespread, that their breadth and coverage has improved in recent years and that the statutory sick pay scheme as a whole has worked well. It seems to me to be right that employers should accept greater responsibility for short-term sickness among those whom they employ. The Minister for Social Security and Disabled People is sitting beside me. I ought therefore to point out that, when demands on Social Security Ministers are high, we ought to do more for the long-term sick and disabled, for the less well-off pensioners on income support and for those who need help with residential and nursing care. It is right, when we consider how to use social security money, to consider our priorities. That is at the core of my argument.

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): If I may refer to occupational sick pay schemes in the public sector, in particular to civil service and local government schemes, there have recently been a number of horrendous reports of people regarding days off for sickness as though they were extra holidays. Can the Minister say whether the Bill will help to combat that abuse?

Mr. Newton: I had not intended to refer to that issue; I feared that it might inflame the hon. Member for Oldham, West, who is fairly easily inflamed. My hon. Friend may have in mind something to which I had decided not to refer—a recent Audit Commission report suggesting extraordinary levels of above-average absence through sickness in a number of London boroughs. I do not wish either to add or to detract from what the Audit Commission says, or to speculate about the reasons for it, or to suggest what the effect upon the Bill might be. However, my hon. Friend may seek to intervene in order to comment further on the matter.

I was seeking to say something about the pattern of occupational sick pay schemes. Obviously, I recognise that not everyone is covered; we have debated that point in the last few minutes. Under some schemes, some new employees may have to serve a qualification period before becoming eligible for occupational sick pay. A typical qualifying period for short-term sickness cover is three months. However, it is worth remembering that half of all private sector schemes—this follows on from some of the points made by Opposition Members—have no exclusion clauses at all. All employees in those schemes are covered from day one, regardless of length of service, job grade and so on.

As I have said, where there is a qualifying period, it would typically be about three months—perhaps, in some cases, six months—which is substantially less than the qualifying period for state sickness benefit. To receive state sickness benefit, in broad terms—I will not go into all the complications of the national insurance rules—it is necessary to pay contributions for two years, whereas large numbers of those in occupational sick pay schemes qualify for benefit from day one, and the great majority within three or six months.

Ms. Short: Will the Secretary of State help all of us by giving his best estimate of the proportion of the working population who are covered? I do not want him to give the House these false figures relating to employers who cover some of their workers. What proportion of the British work force are covered by an occupational sickness scheme?

Mr. Newton: I have given the hon. Lady the best information that I can give, drawn from the survey that we conducted. If my right hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security and Disabled People can add to that, he will certainly seek to do so later in the debate. What is unarguable is that a substantial proportion of the British work force are covered by occupational sick pay schemes.

There is one other point that I should make. I am not quite sure whether the hon. Member for Ladywood is going to raise the question of those who are earning less than £46 a week, and are therefore below the lower earnings limit at present. If she is including those people in her reference to the proportion of the British work force, hers is a pretty poor point. Admittedly, they do not qualify for statutory sick pay, but in many cases they have deliberately chosen not to enter the national insurance system, and therefore would not qualify for state sickness benefit either. In effect, they have made a choice to stay out of the area of coverage for short-term sickness.

I would be interested to know whether the hon. Lady's implicit attempts to argue that point include those people who are in the work force, but have quite deliberately chosen to keep their earnings below £46 a week in order to stay clear of the national insurance system. We know that a lot of people do that, but that is a decision for them. I am not willing to accept that they should be included in the hon. Lady's statistics to somehow undermine the validity of what I am saying about the growth in coverage of occupational sick pay schemes.

Ms. Short: I am happy to answer the Secretary of State. It is my view that we should extend the coverage for sickness and so on to part-time workers, as well as full-time workers. However, I think he knows that that is not the point that I am making. He keeps quoting the misleading statistic that 90 per cent. of the British work force work for employers who offer some occupational sickness scheme. That could include a tiny number in management positions in a very big work force: the right hon. Gentleman knows that. I am referring to the people within the national insurance scheme, which is being whittled away. I am not referring to those who work very short hours; that is a separate issue. Will he give the House

[Ms. Short]

his best estimate of the proportion of the work force who are covered? I doubt that it is half, and I do not want him to mislead the House and say that the figure is 90 per cent.

Mr. Newton: I do not think that I could be accused of having misled the House; I have no intention of doing that. It is clear that the proportion is very substantial. If my right hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security and Disabled People or I can give the hon. Lady any further help on that point later in the debate, we will.

It is a striking fact that so large a proportion of the work force—more than 90 per cent.—work for employers who have occupational sick pay schemes. It is incontrovertible that the spread of those schemes—which formerly excluded rather more people than they do now—has been substantial, and that a sizeable proportion of those in employment are either covered by occupational sick pay schemes or work for employers who, as a matter of practice, will go on paying them—often full pay—for some period when they are sick.

Mr. Meacher: I repeat that this is the absolutely key, hinge point of the Bill. Does the right hon. Gentleman accept, and has his Department not briefed him—I am sure it has—that the IFF survey, to which he refers, involved a sample which was over-stratified in favour of large companies? Large companies are more likely to provide occupational sick pay, but there has been a reduction in their number and a huge increase in small companies with fewer than 20 or even 10 employees. It is precisely because they were under-represented in the survey and they do not offer occupational sick pay that the survey is so fallacious. Is the Secretary of State not therefore basing the whole Bill on a fallacy?

Mr. Newton: No, I am not. There are a number of interrelated points in the argument and we are arguing on one narrow front. The hon. Gentleman will remember from my uprating statement that we are undertaking a variety of steps here, all of which have some relationship to his point. Yes, there has been a large and welcome development of small firms. As I have often said, many of them will have employees who are paid less than £175 a week—or £185 a week, as it will be from next April—at which point they get into the full range of employers' contributions. Those firms are getting a proportionately larger reduction in their employers' contributions.

Equally, a significant number of employees of small firms will qualify not for the higher rate of statutory sick pay but for the lower rate. The lower rate was fully uprated in line with prices precisely because, as I said in my uprating statement, it was more likely to go to employees whose employers were not providing occupational cover.

The package as a whole includes the changes in the reimbursement arrangements, what has been done with the rates of SSP, including the full uprating of the lower rate, and the reduction in national insurance contributions, which is worth some £250 million to employers as a whole. While I am not in any way seeking to dismiss the hon. Gentleman's point about small employers, that very point has been carefully taken into account in the package of proposals with which this measure—the only one in the Bill which requires such legislation—is associated.

Employees who do not yet have any occupational sick pay cover tend to be people in low-paid or part-time employment. As I have said, it is precisely for that reason that the uprating proposals provided for a full uprating of the lower rate of SSP, which is what those groups are most likely to receive.

The summary to the sick pay report, which we have just been discussing—I stress that it was carried out by an independent research company—concludes:

"Looking to the future, the level of cover is likely to increase further, as employment continues to shift towards industries with more generous schemes (i.e. service and new manufacturing industries); traditional differentials between manual and non manual grades are further eroded; and as part of the continuing improvement in terms and conditions of employment".

It is on that record and prospect, derived in part from the report but by no means only from it, that we are seeking to build.

The proliferation of occupational sick pay schemes now means that, for the great majority of those in work, the rates of SSP bear little or no relation to the amount that they receive when sick. It is right that the Government should take account of that in the future development of the scheme and in considering the distribution of available resources within the social security budget as a whole.

Let me now outline the proposals for the restructuring of statutory sick pay which I announced to the House during my uprating statement on 24 October. As has become clear from our exchanges over the past few minutes, the proposals contain two elements. The first comprises the reimbursement arrangements for employers, which are the subject of the present Bill. The second relates to the changes in the rates and earnings thresholds for SSP.

I should make it clear that the latter will be covered in a separate SSP uprating order and will be debated in the House, with the main benefit uprating package, in due course. It would perhaps not be proper for me to anticipate that debate, although it is right—again, as our exchanges have clearly shown—to refer to those changes during this Second Reading debate, because they form part of the general restructuring of SSP.

As hon. Members know, there are two rates of statutory sick pay. At present, the lower rate goes to those employees whose average weekly earnings are between £46 and £125—£46 being the lower earnings level at which national insurance contributions become payable. As I explained to the hon. Member for Ladywood, I propose to increase that rate, in line with the full retail prices index amount of 10·9 per cent., from £39·25 to £43·50—an increase of £4·25 a week. That is in recognition of the fact that those in low-paid or part-time employment are less likely to have occupational sick pay cover when they fall sick.

At the same time, I propose that the dividing line between the two rates, which, as I have said, is set at £125, should be increased to cover the whole range of earnings bands within which employers pay the lower rate of contributions. At present, that covers employees earning less than £175 a week, with an increase to £185 from April 1991 under the proposals that I announced for the re-rating of national insurance contributions following the Chancellor's autumn statement on 8 November. I propose to leave the higher rate of SSP unchanged this year at £52·50. Subject to parliamentary approval, the changes will take effect from 6 April 1991 and I made it clear in my uprating statement that they will reduce public expenditure by about £100 million in 1991-92.

As I have said, this is not perhaps the proper parliamentary occasion on which to discuss those proposals in detail, but I must stress that the vast majority of employees will face no reduction in the total payment that they receive when sick. That is because of the way in which occupational sick pay under employers' schemes interacts with SSP.

It may help if I explain just how the reimbursement arrangements work. Each month, employers deduct from their regular remittances of national insurance contributions to the collector of taxes the gross amount of SSP that they have paid to their employees. If the total contributions due amount to less than the SSP paid, the employer can similarly adjust his payment of PAYE tax. Should the total of both national insurance contributions and tax be insufficient to allow full recovery, the employer can either wait until the next month's payment to recover the balance or apply to the Inland Revenue for a direct refund.

In addition, since April 1985—some time after the scheme came into operation—an employer has also been able to recover, by deduction from his remittances of national insurance contributions, an amount by way of compensation for the cost of the national insurance contributions payable on SSP itself. That amount is fixed each year and, at present, is 7 per cent. of the total SSP paid.

Having explained the reimbursement arrangements—I hope with reasonable clarity—let me outline the provisions in the Bill. All the substantive provisions are in clause 1. Clause 1(1) reduces the amount of SSP that employers can recover in the way that I have described from 100 per cent. to 80 per cent. Clause 2(2) enables that percentage to be varied by order. Clause 1(3) brings to an end the additional 7 per cent. compensatioin rate. The first of the two remaining subsections enables regulations to be made to cater for rounding to the nearest penny, and the second makes the consequential amendment to the Social Security Act 1975 relating the transfer of funds between the Consolidated Fund and the national insurance fund. Clauses 2 and 3 deal with consequential and supplementary matters and are in the standard format that appears in most Social Security Bills. I do not propose to deal with those clauses in detail, but I want to make two points.

The first point relates to subsection 3 of clause 2, which contains a power to make transitional regulations. Hon. Members may like to know that the intention is for those to provide that all payments of SSP made before 6 April 1991 will continue to be subject to 100 per cent. reimbursement plus the 7 per cent. compensation, even if not recovered from remittances to the Inland Revenue until after that date. Payments of SSP made on or after 6 April will be recoverable at the new 80 per cent. rate, and no additional compensation will apply.

The second point relates to subsection 2 of clause 3, about commencement. As I have just made clear, it is intended that the provisions will come into effect from 6 April 1991. If there are other points about the fairly elaborate detail of those two clauses that hon. Members wish to raise, my right hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security and Disabled People will try to answer them when he replies.

As the explanatory and financial memorandum to the Bill explains, the change from 100 per cent. to 80 per cent. reimbursement will result in public expenditure savings of £181 million in 1991-92, rising to £190 million and £197 million in the following two years. In addition, the ending of the 7 per cent. compensation rate will increase income to the national insurance fund by £71 million in 1991-92, £75 million in 1992-93 and £78 million in 1993-94.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): To what extent will that be offset by the reduction in national insurance contributions, or is that the net figure?

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend has raised a good point. That is the total of expenditure saving plus additional income as it were or reduced outgoings to the national insurance fund, which, as my hon. Friend will see from the figures, amounts to about £250 million.

Ms. Short: What?

Mr. Newton: If we add £181 million to £71 million, it amounts to £252 million.

Ms. Short: What if we add together the £197 million and the £78 million?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Lady is adding up the figures for the following years. I am happy if she does that, and if need be, we can set out the three-year figures. However, inevitably they will be subject to uncertainty, because many variables are involved. The figures given are the best efforts that could be made at the time. I believe that the easiest figure to concentrate on at the moment is the combined total of the saving in public expenditure, plus the increased revenue to the national insurance fund, which is of the order of £250 million. As has been noted, that takes no account of the reduction in national insurance contributions, which itself is about £250 million. I said in my uprating statement that it would be more than £200 million. When I gave the details on 8 November, the figure was larger than I had signalled in my uprating statement. In practice, the reduction announced on 8 November is about £250 million.

I do not mean to pretend that there is or can be a direct equivalence for every employer between their reduction in national insurance contributions and the additional amount that they might have to pay for statutory sick pay. However, it is clear from my figures that the offset is substantial when we consider employers as a whole in respect of the reimbursement side of the package.

Mr. Wallace: The Secretary of State has presented a package to the House including the measures in the Bill, the reduction in employers' insurance contributions and the freezing of the higher rate of SSP and the change in the threshold. With regard to the last factor, is there a further £100 million saving to the Treasury? As a package, is there a reduction in public expenditure of £100 million? If that is the Treasury's gain, whose loss is it?

Mr. Newton: I hope that it was clear in my uprating statement and in everything else that I have said that the figures I have given in response to my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) and to the hon. Member for Ladywood relate to the public expenditure saving in the Bill together with increased national insurance revenue, which is not a saving in public expenditure in the Bill as against the reduction in national insurance contributions. None of that embraces the £100 million to which I referred a few minutes ago, arising from

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the fact that the higher rate of SSP is not being uprated and from the change in the thresholds. That is absolutely clear and I would not wish to risk misleading anyone about it.

As to who has gained, my uprating statement included significant increases in benefit for those in residential care and nursing homes, an improvement in income support for less well-off pensioners, and last Wednesday the House debated a Bill which will steer significant additional money over the next two or three years to the long-term sick and disabled. I do not run away from the fact that Social Security Ministers must face priorities in the way in which they spend and use money. This Bill is part of an assessment of where the weight of state resources should be directed to achieve the best value for the taxpayers' money.

Mr. Richard Alexander (Newark): Taking the package as a whole, and in view of today's figures, the National Federation of Self Employed and Small Businesses believes that many firms will have to pay up to £11 a week more for up to 28 weeks. If that is the case, it is a matter of concern. Will the Secretary of State deal with that concern?

Mr. Newton: I will refer to examples later against the background of the fact that, while the maximum extension of SSP following changes made around 1985 is now 28 weeks, the average spell of sickness is probably about three weeks. We must take account of the likely expectation and experience and of the reduction in national insurance contributions. I will give some examples shortly which should ease my hon. Friend's anxieties and should also significantly ease the anxieties of the National Federation of Self Employed and Small Businesses, which has not perhaps yet had the fullest opportunity to digest the reduction in national insurance contributions that I announced on 8 November.

Many of the early comments on the proposals have, not unnaturally, centred on the effect on employers. Before I refer to that, I want to refer briefly to the implication for employees and to emphasise that the changes in the Bill —I am not here talking about the other £100 million, for which there could be slightly different arguments—have no direct effect on employees. Their entitlement to particular payments remains entirely unchanged by the change in reimbursement and compensation arrangements for employers.

I am aware that it has been suggested in some quarters that it will in some way disadvantage disabled people by making employers less willing to take them on. Exactly the same was said when SSP in its present form was first introduced, and on the occasion of earlier changes, such as extending the period for which SSP is payable. I believe that those fears proved groundless in the past, and I see no reason to suppose that they are any better founded now. Indeed, we do not expect any change in the pattern of employment of people with disabilities as a result of these changes.

In general, people with disabilities do not have bad attendance records. Their records are likely to be as good as, if not better than, average. The 1984 general household survey showed that half of all people with disabilities in work took fewer than five days a year off work for sickness or treatment, and that, over a five-year period, half of them had not had a spell of sickness or treatment lasti a month. Consequently, there is no reason to suppose th employers' SSP liability for them would be any great than for the average employee.

My right hon. Friend the Minister for Social Securi and Disabled People shares my view that there are ma other factors of far greater importance in determining j opportunities for disabled people. Both the Department Social Security, and perhaps even more importantly t Department of Employment, have developed numero policies to seek to promote the employment of people wi disabilities. Those opportunities advanced in this Hou only four days ago when we debated the disability worki allowance proposals in the Bill that we discussed Wednesday, which we are hoping to bring into effect April 1992. That will certainly have more effect on t encouragement of disabled people to work and on scope for them to work than will the proposals that we discussing to day.

I come now to some of the points raised by my ho Friends about the position of employers under the Bill. is important to see its proposals in the context of reductions in national insurance contributions, to whic shall shortly refer, and which go a long way towa offsetting any additional costs arising from the reduc recovery arrangements.

Hon. Members who were here when SSP introduced in 1983—I confess that I was one of them think that I was the Under-Secretary serving on the —will recall that employers' organisations argued stron in favour of the sort of arrangements that we have no I would not want to disguise that fact. Their view entirely reasonable at the time, especially as the sche was new and an untried departure. After detai discussions, the Government agreed to provide for the per cent. recovery system.

It is equally and eminently reasonable for us to h taken a fresh look at the system, now that we have nea a decade of successful practical experience of the sche and in the light of other developments in and demands the social security system—that is what we are doing practice. In particular, we have examined the implicati of full reimbursement for employers with occupatio sick pay schemes.

Because SSP can be offset against occupational sick liability, and because employers can get back all the they pay, in some cases that reduces the amount of sick that employers would othewise pay anyway under t own schemes. So in some cases—I do not say in all— 100 per cent. recovery arrangements provide a posi financial advantage for employers. Now that SSP is bedded in, it is reasonable that we should examine extent of that and whether it is right to retain it in present form.

I know that some employers have argued that it is the employers' place to provide short-term sickness c for their employees. As I said earlier, and in my upra statement, I do not agree. That flies in the face of what been happening: a growing number of employers ac that it is their responsibility to be concerned short-term sickness among their employees.

I recognise that it is not always so easy for sm employers to provide the sort of cover that employe major companies provide, but many of them do so short-term, if not for long-term, sickness. Provisio occupational sick pay is now the norm, not the excep

and as I told the hon. Member for Ladywood, when smaller employers do not operate formal schemes, they often make discretionary payments or continue full pay for short periods of sickness. We cannot quantify that as well as the hon. Member for Ladywood or I would like, but it does show that the hon. Lady was overstating what we might call the occupational sick pay gap.

Mr. Christopher Gill (Ludlow): Will my right hon. Friend give particular consideration to the thousands of small firms that have been established under this Government's tenure of office? They will be especially affected by the legislation and they would like to think that the Minister will give them some consideration. They will be somewhat taken aback by these proposals.

Mr. Newton: I hope to do precisely that by giving some illustrative examples of what the position would be for a given number of employees earning the sort of sums that we might be discussing, taking account of the reduction in national insurance contributions that they would experience at the same time. I hope that that will be useful.

Somewhat different considerations apply in relation to the 7 per cent. additional compensation rate, which was introduced as part of the legislation which extended SSP from eight to 28 weeks. It was intended to compensate employers for the cost of the national insurance contributions that they pay on SSP. This part of the arrangements has been of only limited success. Despite wide publicity, as many as a quarter of employers do not claim it. Furthermore, in the interests of simplicity, it is available on all SSP paid, even when the total SSP is below the lower earnings limit, and so will not have attracted national insurance liability in the first place. I hope that I carry the hon. Member for Ladywood with me.

Now, the lower rate of statutory sick pay is £39·25 a week. The lower earnings limit is £46 a week. No national insurance liability arises on £39·25 a week, therefore, yet the current compensation arrangements compensate employers for a payment that they are not making. So this part of the arrangement is not very satisfactory; it has not been working well; and the justification for at least part of it is far from clear.

Ms. Short: My understanding is that part of the reason for the compensation was the administrative burden associated with reclaiming—especially for small firms. The Minister is talking as though he is recovering money, but are firms no longer to be compensated for the burden of administering statutory sick pay?

Mr. Newton: When the arrangements were first put in place and subsequently modified, a whole variety of arguments was advanced. Employers certainly mentioned the administrative problems that they might be caused, but most of them have discovered that the problem is much smaller than they had thought. Whatever the rationale behind the system at the time, this part of it has not worked very well and has no clear justification. It would certainly be difficult to see its justification in a case in which all the employees concerned were paid the lower rate of statutory sick pay, none of which attracted national insurance contributions. This is certainly not a tidy or defensible arrangement, and although I would not have tried to disturb it for its own sake, we thought it right to do so when drawing up the wider package of changes that I have just described.

Mr. Favell: Is the number of days off taken for sickness increasing or decreasing?

Mr. Newton: I cannot answer that off the cuff, but I shall ask my right hon. Friend and provide what information we have at the end of the debate.

It is important to put the hundreds of millions of pounds that we have been discussing in perspective. The amount involved in the reduction to 80 per cent. reimbursement from what is in effect, if not in legal terms, 107 per cent. now, is about £250 million in the coming financial year. That must be compared with total labour costs in the British economy of about £300 billion. We are talking about little more than 0·05 per cent. of total labour costs in the economy as a whole. We cannot dismiss it on that ground, but it is important to recognise that we are talking about a small sum in relation to the total cost of which it forms a part.

The implications for employers generally will be fairly small. The precise effects will obviously depend on the level of sickness experienced in a work force, but as I said, it should be remembered that, although SSP is payable for 28 weeks, the average spell of sickness lasts for only three weeks, and 90 per cent. of sickness is over within eight weeks. Crucially, whatever the gross effect of the Bill's changes, the net effect will be significantly smaller, perhaps in some case completely eliminated by the significant reduction in employers' national insurance contributions which will come into effect at the same time and are an important part of the context in which the Bill must be seen.

As a result of my annual review of the level of the national insurance fund and the prospective demands upon it, I found it possible to reduce the standard rates of national insurance payable by employers. I propose reducing the standard rate payable by employers from 10·45 to 10·4 per cent. More importantly, I propose to reduce the lower rates, which are currently 5, 7 and 9 per cent. in respect of employees earning up to £175 a week, to 4·6, 6·6 and 8·6 per cent. respectively.

Those changes will reduce employers' costs by about £250 million and, as I said in response to interventions, they are likely to be especially helpful to employers, often smaller employers, whose employees are among the less highly paid. For example, for an employee earning £70 a week, the employer's national insurance contribution will reduce by 28p a week. For an employee earning £120, the reduction will be 48p, and for an employee on £170, it will be 68p.

Those sums may seem small, and it seems sensible to give one or two illustrations of how the SSP and contribution changes interact. Let us look at a small employer with five employees each earning £170 a week. If one of them receives three weeks SSP in the year, which equates to the present average duration of sickness, the extra cost to the employer in SSP would be £82·41, assuming that he makes good the difference between the higher and lower rates of SSP with occupational sick pay. The employer would be making an annual saving on his national insurance contribution liability of £176·80, making him £94·39 better off.

I have taken a case in which only one employee had three weeks off, and that could be said to be an unduly favourable example. If the same employer had two members of his work force of five on three weeks' sickness in a year, he would still make a saving on additional SSP

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against reduced national insurance contributions of £11·98 a week. If an employer with 20 employees all earning £170 a week had four of them off sick for three weeks each, his average saving would be nearly £400—or, to be precise, £377·56

Ms. Short: If some firms gain, it inevitably means that others will lose.

Mr. Newton: The hon. Lady does not need to prompt me about matters that I intend to put to the House in the interests of a properly balanced debate.

The examples that I have given are reasonable illustrations of what will happen to smaller employers, but by definition they cannot represent the position of all employers. I agree that for some employers with rather higher-paid employees, and especially those immediately above the level that takes them into the standard rate of national insurance contributions—what will be the 10·4 per cent.—the position may not be quite like that which I have described. There is no way in which I can say that no employer will have some additional modest costs as a result of the proposals.

What I am seeking to do meets the main thrust of the arguments presented by my hon. Friends about smaller businesses and the National Federation of Self-Employed and Small Businesses. I am trying to show that it is entirely credible to suppose, in the light of the effect of national insurance contribution reductions, that some of the hasty comments by smaller employers are unlikely to be borne out in terms of additional burdens upon them. Some may find that they are better off. I note what the hon. Member for Ladywood said. I certainly do not want to give the impression that employers will always come out on top. My earlier macro-figures, the micro-figures that I gave within the last few minutes and what I said about the £250 million entitle me to say that, overall, any increase in employers' costs will be relatively modest.

Mr. Grylls: I am reluctant to intervene for the second time and run the risk of becoming a bore. Earlier I asked my right hon. Friend a question and he has omitted to answer it, no doubt accidentally. Has he consulted the Minister with responsibility for small businesses? If he had done that, he would have avoided criticism from the National Federation of Self Employed and Small Businesses and other organisations. Has my right hon. Friend had such consultations, and if so, what did the Minister say? Has he considered a two-tier system reducing from 100 to 80 per cent. for large employers and down to 90 per cent. for smaller employers? My right hon. Friend will know of good examples of two-tier systems in legislation.

Mr. Newton: I shall take my hon. Friend's latter point first. I am always reluctant to rule out looking at anything, because, as my hon. Friend and the House know, I am willing to consider constructive suggestions. I hope that I have clearly shown that the way in which we have geared the reduction in national insurance contributions will be particularly advantageous to smaller employers. It would be difficult at the same time to go down the path of gearing the basic reimbursement arrangements so that they would also be especially favourable to small employers. Many of the advantages of a straightforward and simple operation of the scheme are in some ways enhanced by my proposa especially the one to get rid of the funny 7 per ce compensation arrangement. Those advantages would lost if we attempted to have different rates reimbursement for firms of different types and sizes.

I emphasise to my hon. Friend the Member for Surr North-West (Mr. Grylls) that I am not attempting evade his question about consultation. I hope that I ha not given that impression. He will be aware that proposals were developed during the public expenditu round that led to my uprating statement on 24 Octob They were examined in terms of the context, pattern a priorities of social security expenditure as a whole.

I make no apology for that, but it meant that, by very nature of the way in which the processes work, it v not possible to engage in advance in substan consultation. We shall be more than willing to listen a respond, as I have done in the debate, to representati on specific issues. In the debate and in future, I shall s to justify on their merits the general thrust of the propos and their basic structure and purpose.

We have made sure that all the relevant organisati have been put in the picture about our proposals. T have been sent copies of the Bill. If they want to m particular points to us, whether through my hon. Fri the Member for Surrey, North-West or in any other w I shall look at them. However, I do not wish to hold the hope that we shall move away from the basic thrus these proposals, which I believe are justified on the gro that I have given many times.

Mr. Battle: Does the Bill not include a power for Secretary of State to enact further reductions with having to come back to the Ho e for the matter to discussed? Is this not the last chance for us to discuss

Mr. Newton: The proposal is that there should b power to vary the rate, but not in a way that wo preclude parliamentary discussion.

Ms. Short: Not on a Government motion.

Mr. Newton: The hon. Lady is making the point the proposal in the Bill involves the negative rather t the affirmative procedure. The Opposition have n shown any reluctance to use the prayer as an instrum for parliamentary debate. It is unlikely that the Opposi would not wish a debate to take place. One can vote negative order, just as one can vote on an affirma order.

Ms. Short: Give us an affirmative order, then.

Mr. Newton: I do not know whether the hon. Lady have the chance to make a speech. She has made e point that she could make in interventions in mine. If ever gets the chance to make them in a connected for shall listen to them with proper interest. Fortunately, right hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security Disabled People will be the Minister who will reply connected form.

Whether in a connected or in an unconnected for shall now move reasonable rapidly to bring my speec a conclusion. [HON. MEMBERS: "No."] Rare is it for House to demand to hear more of the Secretary of S for Social Security who has been going on more or les ever on a reasonably complicated and sometimes ar matter. I should feel guilty if I did not give the

Member for Ladywood the chance to make her remarks in a connected form and for once to make them standing rather than sitting.

Ms. Short: I have not done badly.

Mr. Newton: No, the hon. Lady has not done badly. I congratulate her on her self-restraint. Let us see whether it continues for the rest of the debate.

I think that the House will be pleased, although I began to doubt that a moment ago, to know that I am nearing the end of my long speech, or what might be seen as a long series of answers to interventions. Before I reach the end, I must say something about statutory maternity pay, which is another relevant point, although it is not covered by the Bill.

In my uprating statement, I said as part of the background to these proposals, that it was no longer sensible for the development of statutory sick pay and of statutory maternity pay to go hand in hand. There is much less occupational cover for maternity leave than there is for sickness, and in that case, the level of reimbursement will remain at 100 per cent. for SMP, with compensation payable at an appropriate rate for the contributions payable on SP.

As I said in my statement, that separation has the advantage of enabling me to treat the SMP rate differently as well. I propose to increase the flate rate element of SMP by rather more than the full RPI increase—by £1 a week over the rate of inflation—so that it will go up by £5·05, from £39·25 to £44·50. I have made a parallel increase in the residual national insurance maternity allowance, which will be raised from £35·70 to £40·60.

Looking at what is provided as part of the even wider package—looking at SMP, which is not covered by the Bill, as well as SSP, some of the proposals on which are covered—there is overall the additional ingredient of a real increase in benefit for some 315,000 mothers-to-be, which has been widely welcomed. I have to acknowledge that that is only an incidental advantage of these proposals, although it is an important one.

The main point is the one that I made in the uprating statement and have reiterated today, making it as clear as I can. Against the background of the many demands on social security and the development of occupational cover for short-term sickness, the resources of the taxpayer should be more clearly concentrated on those least likely to have occupational provision or on other areas of social security for which employers cannot be expected to provide. That is the objective of the Bill, and I commend it to the House.

5.14 pm

Mr. Michael Meacher (Oldham, West): We have just listened to an extremely long and agonised defence of the Bill. I think that I will carry the whole House with me when I say that that speech has not increased the Bill's credibility.

Perhaps the most charitable thing that can be said about this mean, nasty and unnecessary little Bill is that it is a hangover from the Thatcherite era. Like the author of that era, it is harsh on the low-paid, especially women. It bases its rationale on a selective and highly misleading interpretation of the evidence and it ignores facts where they are inconvenient. I have not heard such a dishonest and deceitful defence by a Secretary of State for a considerable time. The length of his speech was in inverse proportion to the credibility of the Bill.

The Bill pushes further still the prejudice of "public sector bad, private sector good", even when the employers passionately disagree. Here we have the authentic mark of Thatcherism, as the Secretary of State, a member of the Cabinet, will agree. It is being foisted autocratically on people, without a shred of consultation. When the right hon. Member says that he will listen to arguments in future, but the remaining stages of the Bill are being rushed through on Wednesday, his assurance does not carry much conviction. It shows how anxious the Government are to push through the Bill before systematic opposition to it can be mounted. If the Prime Minister wanted a squalid little memorial to her reign, this could be it.

The effect of the changes that the Secretary of State has outlined, according to an answer given by the Under-Secretary of State two weeks ago, is that 3 million employees with earnings between £125 and £175 a week will no longer be eligible for the higher rate of statutory sick pay if they fall sick after 6 April next year. About one fifth of that number, or about 600,000 people, are expected to claim statutory sick pay annually, and they will lose an average £9 a week. Because low-paid workers are primarily the victims of these measures, 60 per cent. of all the losers are expected to be women.

I should add immediately that these cuts next year are not new, nor the first. Similar cuts were imposed on sick employees only a few months ago. In April this year, the Secretary of State removed nearly 2 million workers earning between £90 and £125 a week from eligibility for higher rate SSP. Of those, about 300,000 are expected to claim SSP annually, and they are losing an average of £13 a week each week. As many as three quarters of those losers are expected to be women.

The Bill is part of a clear pattern. The number of losers and the amounts that they will lose are even greater this year, but the pattern of whittling down the sick pay rights of those on low incomes has already been set. There is every reason to suspect that the Government will continue the process of erosion each year that they remain in power. The Secretary of State glided over this point, so I invite him, if he wishes to take time from my speech, despite the length of his, to give the House a guarantee that there will be no further cuts. We are interested to know the Government's intentions. Does the right hon. Gentleman wish to intervene? He does not. We can draw our own conclusions from that.

There is another striking fact about the Bill: the Secretary of State has the support of no one in introducing it, which is fairly rare. The Confederation of British Industry, the National Federation of Self Employed and Small Businesses, the Trades Union Congress, trade unions and voluntary bodies such as the Low Pay Unit and the Disability Alliance do not support the Bill. I suppose that it is a true Thatcherite Bill—two fingers to the rest of the country, the Prime Minister is right and everyone else has got it wrong.

The Bill does not even have the support of the Government's adviser, the Social Security Advisory Committee. Because the Government have not consulted about the Bill, the SSAC has not had a chance to comment on these proposals. It gave its view on the April 1990 changes which, as I said, were on almost exactly the same lines as the Bill's provisions. Like the Bill, those changes

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increased the higher rate pay threshold by much more than inflation. The SSAC opposed that because the majority of the losers were women and "a significant number" of the losers would not have occupational sick pay cover and would be significantly worse off if they had to claim statutory sick pay.

Like the Bill, those changes in April 1990 increased the higher rate benefit by less than inflation. The SSAC opposed that a year ago because it would impose additional financial burdens on businesses, because employers would be less willing to employ disabled people and those with poor health records and because employers who did not have their own sick pay schemes might be deterred from introducing them. Those were comprehensive and compelling reasons for rejecting the April 1990 changes. They are no less comprehensive and compelling reasons for rejecting these further measures in the Bill and, I repeat, they are the reasons given by the Government's advisory body.

As the Secretary of State has no supporters for the Bill —except, of course, the Treasury—I turn to his reasons for introducing it. In his uprating statement and again today, the right hon. Gentleman gave three reasons. He said that statutory sick pay rates were irrelevant because of the expansion of private occupational sick pay coverage—the crucial point about which we had so many exchanges. On 24 October, the right hon. Gentleman said:

"Occupational sick pay schemes have grown to such an extent that more than 90 per cent. of the work force now work for employers providing this cover . . . This in turn means that, for the great majority of those in work, the rates of SSP bear little or no relation to the amount that they actually receive when sick."—[*Official Report*, 24 October 1990; Vol. 178, c. 349.]

As the Opposition made clear repeatedly, the right hon. Gentleman was citing a 1988 survey, but in such a selective and grossly misleading manner that his defence of it was extremely deceitful and unworthy of him—[HON. MEMBERS "No."] It was unworthy of him. I have great respect for the right hon. Gentleman's integrity, but today he was trying to defend the indefensible, and it showed. A series of interventions by my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) and others of my hon. Friends completely undermined the basis of his case.

The Secretary of State mentioned the increase in the number of employers offering some sort of private scheme, but he did not say—these are the facts—that substantial numbers of employees are not covered by such schemes. He did not respond to my point. I said that the survey showed that 44 per cent. of private sector employers did not offer any form of occupational sick pay provision. Worse still, it is in the hazardous industries, such as mining and construction, where sick pay provision is most needed, that it is least likely to be available. Moreover, more than half the firms with fewer than 10 employees—these firms are growing the fastest—have no sick pay scheme.

The picture is even more patchy than that. Of those firms that have schemes, half of private sector and two thirds of public sector employers operate exclusion clauses. The Secretary of State said little about exclusion clauses even where there are such things. They limit the coverage to certain groups of employees in terms of their length of service, hours of work, grade of job, age or earnings; a range of exclusions cut the cover that people have. Nearly three quarters of all employees are potentially affected by these exclusions. The Se State continues to use the extremely deceptive fi per cent. That is unworthy of a Government s defend a Bill when it is the hinge on which to ju proposals.

All this evidence shows that, when the Sec State said again today that 91 per cent. of the w now work for employers providing occupationa cover, he is being extremely Jesuitical. In fact, a s proportion of the work force—the right hon. G would not hazard a guess, but the percentage is several times larger than the 9 per cent. he implies covered by occupational sick pay provision and the state SSP scheme on which to fall back. Friend the Member for Ladywood hazarded a gu the number, and I suspect that we may be talking million to 15 million workers. The Bill is a majo of their employment rights.

Mr. Newton: Despite my obvious disagreem several of the hon. Gentleman's points, I have n to intervene frequently in his speech. I do not thi can mean that the Bill is a major erosion of peop These proposals do not affect the rights of any If I understand the point aright, the remarks hon. Gentleman just made—indeed, almost that he said—have absolutely nothing to do wit

Mr. Meacher: The right hon. Gentleman i logic. He knows perfectly well that I am referr whole package of measures. I am not talking s about clause 1. This is a narrowly drawn Bill. hon. Gentleman knows that we are discu provision of sick pay for employees and the which that is done.

Mr. Newton: It is important to clear up this hon. Gentleman said that I chose my words ca though that were an accusation. I do not thin would want to mislead anyone. I did not try referring to other parts of the package in my spe very least, when speaking about the effect of th important that the hon. Gentleman should c words carefully.

I advert to a point on which I might have earlier. The hon. Gentleman apparently assu merely because the higher rate of SSP is not bei this year, all those who might be affected by th are somehow losers. Whatever may lie betwee the hon. Gentleman would have to accept th number of those people will not be affected be will get back in occupational sick pay what the received by way of an increase in SSP. Gentleman needs to weigh some of his w accusations more carefully.

Mr. Meacher: On the right hon. Gentlema point, because he could not give a precise occupational sick pay cover, he cannot be sure he says is accurate. We do not know the numbe who will be disadvantaged by the Bill and who occupational sick pay cover. That is pre objection. We have good reason to believe th number of people will lose.

In response to the right hon. Gentleman's fi shall gladly change the word "Bill" to "package equally gladly admit that his justification for th

91 per cent. was inaccurate and that the figure needs to be changed. We are talking not simply of a change of word, but of a change of meaning in the background to the Bill. If the right hon. Gentleman will make that change and acknowledge the inaccuracy of what he was trying to convey, I shall gladly change one word.

The right hon. Gentleman's justification for the Bill fell back on his old friend "targeting". Just as most people are suspicious when the generals talk about military intelligence—which many people regard as a contradiction in terms—when the Tories talk about social targeting, we are entitled to react with similar suspicion. The right hon. Gentleman said in his uprating statement:

"it is better for additional resources from the taxpayer to be concentrated more clearly on those least likely to have occupational provision, or in other areas of social security for which employers cannot be expected to provide."—[*Official Report*, 24 October 1990; Vol. 178, c. 349.]

As so often happens when the Tories talk about targeting, the effect will be the opposite of what they predict. Instead of concentrating more resources on workers least likely to have occupational sick pay provision, the Bill will increase discrimination against the potentially sick and the disabled at the point of recruitment. That is a key point. The net effect of the changes will be to increase the net cost to employers in general if an employee falls sick. Obviously, employers will be all the more wary of recruiting anyone whom they feel, whether rightly or wrongly, may become ill or who may be more frequently ill than the average. There is already clear evidence of that, and it shows what the effect of the Bill will be. A study carried out for the Spastics Society entitled "An equal chance for disabled people?" found systematic evidence of the most blatant discrimination by employers.

There is other evidence to show that the right hon. Gentleman is wrong to claim that the Bill will target more aid on those most in need. A substantial number of workers are not covered by occupational sick pay schemes, and they are most likely to be the low paid, part-time workers, or low-grade manual workers. That is also the group that is most vulnerable to abuse by employers trying to evade their legal obligations under the SSP schemes. That was revealed by a report published in 1986, which drew on the experience of citizens advice bureaux throughout the country. It concluded:

"There have been clear instances of deliberate employer abuse of the responsibility to administer SSP. Employees have been told that their firm does not operate SSP, and have been pressurised into becoming self-employed, unemployed, or waiving their right to SSP. There have also been cases of employees being refused statutory sick pay outright, having their medical evidence of incapacity rejected, or simply being dismissed so that the employer can avoid payment."

The right hon. Gentleman said earlier that the SSP scheme was firmly bedded in, and that that justified the further changes being made. The report, in 1986—admittedly that is four years ago, but I doubt whether all the problems have been resolved—says that, far from being bedded in, it is still working improperly.

Mr. Alexander: The hon. Gentleman's allegations are serious and they need to be considered seriously. Does he have information about where those instances happened, and does he know whether complaints were made at the time that sick pay was refused?

Mr. Meacher: I was quoting a survey by the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux, which I regard as an extremely reputable organisation. It is supported on both sides of the House. It engages in very thorou investigations. It has 900 or more offices throughout t country and it systematically collects data from those w come to its bureaux for assistance. The people who wo for that organisation are well trained, and in considera detail. I know that, because my daughter is one of the The bureaux do not accept reports or anecdotes at seco hand. A NACAB report can be relied upon and must accepted as true.

I shall cite three typical examples from the report. T first reads:

"Mrs. J. works for a private employer. She was not t about the procedure for claiming statutory sick pay. H employer has now refused to pay her statutory sick p because she had not notified him within seven days."

That is one example of an improper and, I suspect, illeg response by an employer.

The second example is:

"Mrs. N. is an embassy worker earning above the natio insurance lower earnings limit and in full-time work. She h been off sick for three weeks and her employers had advis her that she was not entitled to statutory sick pay or a sickness pay from them."

In fact, the rights office advised the woman to take up t matter with her employers, and statutory sick pay was th paid. However, we must ask how many cases of that so of response from an employer do not lead to peop seeking advice from the rights office and having the matt put right.

The third example is:

"Mr. I. was employed as a driver for a small firm. H earned less than £80 for a 45-hour working week. H employer refused to pay holiday pay and no sick pay schem is in operation. When Mr. I had been off sick for four day his employer dismissed him."

When the right hon. Gentleman seeks to justify the B by saying that he is targeting the low paid, perhaps w should take him at his word because it is the low paid wh will be the victims of the Bill. The right hon. Gentleman right on one point. It is ironic that he may be correct saying that statutory sick pay rates bear little relation the amount that workers receive, because millions low-paid workers are getting nothing.

The right hon. Gentleman did no better with his thi and last rationale for the Bill. It is a matter of great concern to Tory Members than to Opposition Membe that employers will be compensated for reduced sta reimbursement through offsetting reductions in the rate employers' national insurance contributions. He offere no rationale for reducing state reimbursement employers from 100 per cent. to 80 per cent. I do not thin that there is any rationale, other than the saving to th Treasury of £180 million—a figure that will grow durin the next few years.

The right hon. Gentleman also said in his upratin statement that he would reduce employers' lower an standard rate contributions, and concluded that that "will go some considerable way in helping employer particularly smaller employers who tend to have lower-pai employees, to meet any extra costs which might otherwi arise from the new arrangements."—[*Official Report*, 2 October 1990; Vol. 178, c. 349-50.]

The right hon. Gentleman has expanded on thos remarks at considerable length today, but, as Conservativ Members have said, that is not how it appears to th smaller employers. The National Federation of Se Employed and Small Businesses, in a brief that it ha supplied widely throughout the House, said that it was "strongly opposed to the proposed changes."

[Mr. Meacher]

It gave eight reasons for that. It may be of some relief to hon. Members if I say that I intend to cite only the first two, but as they come from that source they are worth stating clearly. The first reason is:

"When statutory sick pay was first introduced in the early 1980s, the national federation won an agreement from the Government that at no time would employers be asked to foot any of the statutory sick pay payments. With this new measure the same Government have broken that new agreement"—

and the federation adds in capital letters—

"WITHOUT CONSULTATION."

It is not often that I agree with Conservative Members, but the employers are wholly correct about that. From 1979 to 1981, the Government made a series of different proposals to statutory sick pay, giving less than 100 per cent. compensation to employers. Each of those proposals was unsatisfactory, and was heavily and intensely lobbied against by the employers' organisations. As a result, on 15 October 1981, the right hon. Gentleman's predecessor as Secretary of State announced at the Tory party conference that the Government would provide 100 per cent. compensation, despite their previous opposition to doing so.

That situation has prevailed until now, and—not surprisingly—employers are angry with the Government for reneging on the agreement, and without consulting the relevant parties. Fortunately for the Secretary of State, he does not have to stand for re-election either by social security claimants or employers. Even the gerrymandered rules of the Tory leadership election would not save the right hon. Gentleman from either of those factions venting their spleen.

The second reason of the National Federation of Self Employed and Small Businesses for opposing the Bill is that it sees

"this measure as the thin end of the wedge. If reimbursement is 80 per cent. this year, then once the precedent is set, Government will find it easier to move to 60 per cent. next year and 40 per cent. the year after until employers foot the whole SSP payment. The same thing happened on redundancy rebates."

The same progressive rundown occurred also in the Exchequer contribution to the national insurance fund, from 18 per cent. to nothing. So there are certainly precedents for the Government's current action.

As this is the Second Reading of the Bill and we are examining its full implications, perhaps the Secretary of State can say what are the Government's intentions for a progressive reduction in the reimbursement made to employers.

Mr. Newton: The answer is simple, and the hon. Gentleman could have guessed it for himself. We have no plans to make further changes, but given the way that matters have been developing and the continuing need to examine priorities across the whole spectrum of social security, it seems sensible to have a provision that is capable of being changed. However, there is no plan to make any further change. There is no drawer in my desk containing papers with figures pencilled in for future years. Nevertheless, I will not rule out further consideration of that aspect. It would be foolish for either me or the hon. Gentleman to do so.

Mr. Meacher: Without the right hon. admitting that the Government have such an in could not really have gone further.

Mr. Newton: A large part of the social secur including nearly all the rates of benefit—quite the whole range of other rules—is in a form th lock it into primary legislation, so that chan made by secondary legislation. Governme complexions have acknowledged that that is a s of dealing with social security matters. I say no that. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will not some vast, elaborate edifice out of the normal a for dealing with social security matters.

Mr. Meacher: The right hon. Gentleman a his words very carefully, for which I do not blam took great pains not to rule out further chang only that he does not have any plans to changes. I recall the right hon. Member Coldfield (Sir N. Fowler) saying once that he h to make fundamental changes to the pensions a couple of years later he brought forward a pr would almost have ended the state earni pension scheme. Such is the lack of credibility t attach to Ministers' statements.

Of course, the right hon. Gentleman doe something hidden in the drawer of his desk, bu that his officials and civil servants will not revea next stage of their plan until the Bill has been clear that the Government have every in reducing reimbursement below 80 per cent. an quite soon.

The federation makes its threat pretty clear Bill

"goes through, employers will look very closely a they employ. The health record will be a prime choosing an employee."

That is an extremely revealing sentence. The em that if the Bill passes into law, they will be careful about who they employ, and will decisions on the basis of an applicant's hea Anyone with a poor health record or a poor p good health for the future will be unlikely to

Mr. James Cran (Beverley): Will the hon. take it from me, as one who has been closely industrial representations, that it is not un representative bodies to make relatively claims about the likely effect of proposed leg order to influence the Government in a very Does the hon. Gentleman concede that extrava have been made in the past by almost every rep body one can think of, and that that will happen? Does not the hon. Gentleman know th between such representations and common se

Mr. Meacher: The hon. Gentleman clearly s experience. When he says that the representati made to the Government on behalf of th region's Confederation of British Industry shou been taken at face value because they dishonestly exaggerated a point in order t Government policy, he is letting the cat out o a big way.

Dr. John G. Blackburn (Dudley, West): Will the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) confirm the date of the representations to which he refers?

Mr. Meacher: The federation's representations are date-stamped 15 November, which is 11 days ago. Unless the hon. Gentleman is suggesting that the federation has changed its mind, which I doubt, we can assume that they represent the current view of small employers.

The effects of the Bill on prospective employees who have poor health records could hardly be plainer or more worrying. It is no comfort to hear the Secretary of State keep repeating that he will reduce employers' national insurance contributions by one quarter of 1 per cent. The effect could be exaggerated for many small employers if they were confronted by a statutory sick pay payment for up to a maximum of 28 weeks. The National Farmers Union, whose members are probably the largest employers of low-paid workers in the country, stated in a submission dated 14 November:

"The combination of these changes will increase employers' costs for sickness payments by £26·50 per week for employees earning between £125 and £174·99 per week and by £19·90 per week for employees earning £175 or more. These are very significant additional costs for many hard pressed small employers, and they will only be partially offset by the proposed small reductions in National Insurance contributions."

The right hon. Gentleman appears to take a different view, but I quoted the National Farmers Union view, and I look to it for a serious examination of these proposals.

The right hon. Gentleman has achieved a remarkable feat today by creating a unanimous front against the Bill. He has even achieved a situation in which the employers are arguing the case for national insurance—I really did not think that that was possible. If I may quote the National Federation of Self Employed and Small Businesses for the last time, it said that most

"of Britain's businesses employ less than 20 people, and do not have the resources to take on their employees health insurance, that is why national insurance was first introduced."

It is certainly ironic that the Government have chosen to effect this latest erosion of accepted national insurance principles, and to impose a further financial burden of up to £11 or more a week for a maximum of 28 weeks, at the very time when there is an accelerating recession and small businesses are going down like ninepins.

The Bill clearly signals the Government's intention to allow this vital area of social security provision to be removed from the state sector and to be left entirely to the discretion of employers—Opposition Members would say that in many cases it was left to proven abuses by employers.

The right hon. Gentleman's rationale for the measure does not stand up, even to the most superficial analysis. The Bill is unanimously disliked by all the relevant parties, and it has been forced on him by the Treasury. He said that the Bill would pay for other measures, such as residential home charges. I suppose that this is the sick paying for the elderly—the poor paying for the poor. If he does not stand up to that sort of Treasury attack, he should not hold that post. There has been much discrimination by the Government in favour of the rich, and it is quite wrong for the right hon. Gentleman to talk about priorities and to make the poor pay for other benefits for the poor. If he either will not or cannot stand up to the Treasury, we shall certainly stand up to it in the Lobby tonight.

5.52 pm

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): When my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State opened the debate some one and a half hours ago, he pointed out that the Bill is extremely short and for that reason he felt that it should be commended. I agree entirely with my right hon. Friend. The Bill is refreshingly short, and as such compares very favourably with other Bills with which I have recently been involved. Given my interest in social security matters, I should like to think that Bills will always be that short, but I suspect that I may be wrong.

The style demonstrated by the Department was also refreshing. My right hon. Friend made a full speech—as was necessary in such a case—yet he knows that any points of detail that might arise can at once be referred to his right hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security and Disabled People. That was splendid. Having been in his position, although in a less exalted post, I wish my right hon. Friend well, and I look forward to hearing his reply to various points of detail at the end of the debate.

The Bill deals with social security matters. One cannot begin to understand its scope without placing it in a general context. My right hon. Friend referred to the general context of the Bill and its perspective. When discussing what is clearly a valuable but also fairly modest measure, it is all too easy to forget what sort of budget we are dealing with. The social security budget approaches £63 billion a year—a truly vast sum of money. One cannot begin to get to grips with the scope of the Bill until one realises the totality of the expenditure involved. It is an extraordinary sum. A Labour Government would have been proud if it had been able to devote such resources to those who are most in need.

In case the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) is trying to work out the increase that that figure represents compared with the miserable performance of the Government in which he served as a Minister with responsibility for social security with such a lack of distinction, it amounts to about 41 per cent. in real terms, after taking account of inflation.

That is the context in which we should view the Bill, but what is its contribution? *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) is howling from a sedentary position as usual—obviously one of her disconnected remarks. It will be useful to hear what she has to say later.

We cannot begin to assess the worth of the Bill unless we bear in mind its general context. I do not want to detain the House long, as I know that other hon. Members want to take part in the debate. I can see that the hon. Lady has a series of disconnected remarks that she wants to offer to the House. However, I can usefully point out a number of issues.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: I hope that my hon. Friend will make it clear that he is referring to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) and not to me, his colleague.

Mr. Nicholls: Let me save both my hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) and the hon. Member for Ladywood any embarrassment. I am sure that if I accused either of being the other they would both sue me for libel, were it not for the fact that any

[Mr. Nicholls]

remarks that I make are privileged. I accept entirely what my hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster says. I had the hon. Member for Ladywood in mind.

When discussing such expenditure, we must bear in mind the fact that we are not in a position to spend the money until it has been raised. Clearly, we are talking about massive sums. It is interesting that the hon. Member for Oldham, West, in his last few words, could not resist once again presenting our policy in terms of the rich and poor, and talking about the allocation of resources from the poor to the wealthy. That is the constant theme in his remarks. It is deja vu. The last time that I took part in a social security debate was in the previous Parliament. I remember the hon. Gentleman replying on behalf of the Opposition. It is extraordinary that the speech that he gave on that occasion was precisely the same as the speech that he made today. Perhaps one should never accuse a politician of being at fault because he is being consistent, but the trouble is that the hon. Gentleman is consistently wrong.

The hon. Gentleman talks about the rich and the reallocation of resources, but can we bear it in mind that the money that is necessary for social security expenditure —sickness pay or whatever—has to be raised from the taxpayer? Although the idea that one can have Christmas 365 days a year by wrecking the rich is part of the hon. Gentleman's general attitude, the reality of raising money for all the things that we want it to be spent on is that it will not come from the rich. There are simply not enough rich people to get the amount of money that the hon. Gentleman needs. About 90 per cent. of the money raised in income tax by the Treasury comes from basic rate taxpayers, not from rich people paying higher rate tax, such as the hon. Gentleman and myself. When we are talking about social security and about expenditure totalling £63 billion, we have to remember that we owe it to the people from whom we take the money to ensure that expenditure is targeted on those who need it most.

One of the impressive aspects of the Bill, and the policy underlying it, is that it does not shirk the necessity to spend vast sums of the public's money on social security, but it does something about targeting money on those who clearly need help.

The hon. Gentleman made great play of the Bill's effect upon employers. He quoted from various studies, which showed that employers were concerned about the measure. It was remarkable that it had to be pointed out to the hon. Gentleman that the Bill deals not with the amount of sickness pay but with the mechanism for reimbursement —the difference between 80 per cent. and 100 per cent. We are talking about the contributions that employers might be required to make to statutory sickness pay.

It says something about the hon. Gentleman's acquaintance with the day-to-day business of employment that, when he has to consider the rights and wrongs of asking for a fairly modest contribution from employers towards statutory sickness pay, he can offer us only a litany of faults and errors, which he attributes to the employer community. Whether the hon. Gentleman is talking about social security, employment or trade unions, the moment he mentions the employer community, he cites the worst examples that he can think of. The hon. Gentleman's only contribution to the subject is not to talk about the average employer's relationship employee as he does not want to know merely to talk about bad employers—the he feels will go out to take advantage of pe fend for themselves because of sickness.

Such employers obviously exist, but i base criticism of the Bill on the fact that worst employer to behave worse than he Such prejudice and misunderstanding is u Gentleman.

The hon. Member for Oldham, West a hon. Friend the Secretary of State for so cent. of employees are employed by emp some form of sickness pay. The hon. "Don't give us those figures, let us look instead. I am not sure what they are, but them instead; they will be much worse." he went through a number of docum understood, cobbled together a numbe found one hard, constant figure that must can consider figures, cut them, recut th them, re-present them and make ther anything one wants. That is a measu Gentleman's prejudice, but, as my right h the starting point must be that 91 per ce are covered by a scheme.

Statutory sick pay covers the first 28 w but on average it covers not 28 weeks but In the context of whether employers' co improved, it must be asked: w is th when it is looking after taxpayer's money for an average of three weeks, the state sh relationship between employer and em "Even for a period of only three weeks, bond between employer and employee ar a matter for the state"?

The hon. Member for Oldham, West employers have a role to play or that t responsibilities. Time after time, he says must always be on the state and that it s matter of personal responsibility betwee another.

It is unfair to criticise the hon. Mem West for his lack of experience in govern out that his experience was more than a d he had recent experience of being a sm would realise that it is unreal to think th resent having to make a modest contribu sick pay for an employee who performs a is easy to say when it is considered acade ways, this place passes for an ivory towe perfect sense when preparing one's remar or the Library, but it makes no sen considered against the reality of what hap employer and an employee. That again sh Gentleman cannot remove the idea of bad his mind.

What is wrong in saying that for a period—an average of three or four wee should be asked to make a contribution? I say that, in the past, it was said that under would be 100 per cent. reimbursement, what can happen in practice and the fact t to try to work out where resources must

It has been suggested that, if the schem it will discriminate against employe

otherwise employ sick people. I have news for the hon. Member for Oldham, West. I hope that he will remember, as my right hon. Friend said, that the sickness record of disabled people is extremely good. Anyone who considers the figures will find that they have much to offer. The statistics on their average time away from work show that they are an extremely good bet.

The hon. Member for Oldham, West thinks that employers will go out looking for sick people to employ, but as a result of the Bill will suddenly stop employing them. That is simply unreal. Employers do not go out looking for ill people and say to them, "I shall take you on, but if I have to make a modest contribution towards SSP for a short period I shall not have you on my books." That is complete nonsense, but it does not matter to the hon. Gentleman. He finds the fact that it is complete nonsense positively attractive, because once again it panders to his prejudice, and his almost obsession, that employers will always act from the worst of motives.

The Bill makes a modest but worthwhile contribution and points to the direction that we should be taking. Nevertheless, one theme underlies it, on which for a short period—short enough not to embarrass either of us—the hon. Member for Oldham, West and I might be able to share some agreement. In a more general way—it has to be general for the hon. Gentleman—the Bill is about how we care for people who need care. It forms part of the massive process of public expenditure.

Surely we do those who need the help of state benefits a disservice by holding out the prospect of help and assistance on a scale which is completely unreal and which does not take account of the fact that the money to pay for it must be raised, or by painting a picture that in some way far greater benefits are available. Time and again, we hear Opposition Members say that, if they were restored to power, they would restore the earnings link with pensions. Although that point relates to old-age pensions, it is closely tied to this because it is all about promising more than can be delivered.

The hon. Member for Oldham, West must live with the fact that he was a member of the previous Labour Government who introduced the earnings link for retirement pensions but who failed to implement it in three out of four years. What is best—to set modest targets that we can deliver and fulfil, or to set out a stall of benefits and promises which are tawdry in the extreme and which can never be honoured? I know what attitude I feel more comfortable with. I know what disabled people in my constituency need and what those who are in need of assistance prefer—honesty. In the presentation of the Bill, they have honesty, but if they want the alternative they can read the remarks of the hon. Member for Oldham, West.

6.8 pm

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): The hon. Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls) said that this was the first time that he had spoken in this Parliament on social security matters. It is a consolation to realise that the House has lost little by his imposed silence.

The strange conclusion that the hon. Gentleman reached about pensions was unfortunate. When the last Labour Government took office, the amount paid in pensions increased from 17·5 per cent. of average male earnings to 20·5 per cent. Under the Thatcher Government, it has decreased to 16·5 per cent. The Conservative party has a disgraceful record on bas pensions. The more Conservative Members crow abou what they did, the more that people become antagonist towards them.

The hon. Member for Teignbridge completely misse the point on some matters. He spoke of vast sums, but th Secretary of State spoke of the minute sum of money tha is involved in the Bill. He said that it amounts to 0·05 pe cent. of the wages bill. It sounds a small amount, but fo the worst-off it amounts to £181 million.

Many millions of people collected money last weeken for Children in Need. Many of us supported the campaig and contributed towards it. If the campaign is mor successful than it was last year, the total sum collected ma amount to £30 million. We are talking about six times tha figure. However, the public believe that they have done great deal for children in need, that they have solved th problem and that children do not need social security. might be a good idea if that day were to be christene Thatcher day, in remembrance of the millions of childre whom she has put into need during her years in powe

The Secretary of State made a curious comment abou the disabled. He said that they will not be adversel affected by the Bill. Where is his evidence for tha assertion? Every organisation that contacted hon Members told a different story. The Disability Allianc Educational and Research Association, which covers whole range of groups that look after and lobby for peopl with disabilities, says:

"The withdrawal of the full reimbursement of employe for their payments of SSP and the proposed changes in th structure and level of SSP payments mark an unjustifiabl retraction of state responsibility"—

not that the hon. Member for the middle ages woul recognise that; state responsibility is a fairly moder concept, which has been with us since about 1911—

"resulting in increased hardship and insecurity for many o the most vulnerable workers."

The Disability Alliance points to the additional powe that the Secretary of State will take. Statutory sick pay i a Government-initiated scheme, but salami cuts have gon on year after year. A very large cut is now to be made. Th Secretary of State refused to confirm that he intends t phase it out and reduce its effect altogether.

The Disability Alliance also says:

"Two large-scale recent surveys looking at the employ ment status of people with disabilities revealed that th average earnings of people with disabilities is significantl lower than those of the general population and that disable workers are more likely to be working part time and in lowe grade occupations."

The myth peddled today is that employers are looking fo people with disabilities. That is far from the truth. Th Secretary of State said that people with disabilities have good attendance record, but that is not the genera perception. Disabled people find it very difficult to obtai employment. The Disability Alliance says:

"These groups are most likely, therefore, to be excluded from private schemes and have to depend entirely on the stat SSP scheme. The Disability Alliance fear that increasing th cost to employers of administering SSP will encourage greate discrimination against all workers, particularly those with th most severe disabilities."

There was a bold plan a few years ago under whic companies, Government Departments and all othe employers were to employ at least 3 per cent. registere disabled, but the reality is a disgraceful picture throughou industry. How many disabled people do Governmen Departments employ? In 1986, the Home Office employe

[Mr. Paul Flynn]

0·5 per cent., when it should have employed 3 per cent. However, there has been a decrease in the number of registered disabled people employed: from 0·5 per cent. to 0·3 per cent.—one tenth of what it should be. The Government Department average is only a disgraceful 1·3 per cent. Even the Department of Social Security employs only 1·5 per cent. registered disabled. It is a sorry record. If Government Departments believe that the attendance record of disabled people is good, why do they not give them jobs?

The most detailed picture I have of any Government Department is, not surprisingly, the Welsh Office. The percentage of disabled people whom the Welsh Office has employed since 1980 is a revealing figure. The Secretary of State said that there is no shred of evidence that the introduction of the statutory sick pay scheme had had any effect on the employment of disabled people. In 1980, 1981, and 1982, 2·3 per cent. were employed. From that year onwards, there has been a decline: 2·1 per cent., 1·4 per cent., 1·5 per cent., 1·3 per cent. In 1989, it stood at 1·1 per cent. Statutory sick pay was introduced in 1983, which was when the decline began.

The whole point that the hon. Member for the middle ages missed in his cheap and snide diatribe against my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) was that the basis of the scheme has already disappeared, that it is dead and has joined the choir invisible. We made that point twice at least in the Chamber during two stages of the last Social Security Bill. The report—now old, dog-eared and tattered—was published in 1988 and was based on previous research.

I vividly remember the proceedings on the Social Security Bill. After comprehensively going through the report, I pointed to its weaknesses. I was accused unfairly at the time, by the Minister of State, of quoting selectively from the report, but I quoted every possible conclusion in the report to make my point.

The Secretary of State says that he is not deceitful when he uses the figure of 91 per cent. If he is not deceitful, it was extremely fortunate that he should choose to take that figure. He constructed his sentence in such a way as to make it appear that that large percentage of the work force are covered by decent occupational schemes. He failed even to make a guess about the percentage today. If he does not know what it is, nobody knows.

My hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West pointed out that the report on occupational schemes painted a sorry picture of inadequate schemes that did not cover the most vulnerable. I referred earlier to the fact that, in the private sector, only 56 per cent. of employees are covered by sick pay schemes. Those who are employed in the mining and construction industries, who face the most serious and crippling accidents, are even less well-off. Only 43 per cent. of them are covered by sick pay schemes.

Only 49 per cent. of small employers with 10 employees operate sick pay schemes, but many employees are excluded from them. At least half the employees in the private sector and two thirds of employees in the public sector are excluded. The most common exclusions are recent recruits, since the qualifying period is between three and 12 months. Part timers are also excluded. It is during the first few months in a job, when people are unfamiliar with machinery, that accidents occur. That is especially true in retailing. A large number of the employees are low-paid, part-time women employees.

Only 19 per cent. of private sector schemes and only 22 per cent. of public sector schemes pay sick pay throughout the whole of the six-month period covered by the statutory sick pay scheme. Large numbers of low-paid workers will be asked to rely on inadequate schemes.

Conservative Members are great believers in myths. The hon. Member for Stockport (Mr. Favell) referred in two interventions to his belief that the whole purpose of the Bill is to punish the sick because they go sick. He referred to a report about certain local authorities in London. I suggest that he study it in more detail. If he penetrates beyond the tabloid headlines, he will find that the report has no context: it does not discuss the mass of authorities in the country but confines itself to a limited number—all, coincidentally, Labour-controlled.

The report makes no relevant judgment or comparison. Let us suppose that a comparison was made of absenteeism in the House of Commons. Perhaps this would be an unfair time to do that, but many of us would find that we were doing very badly in relation to our parliamentary salaries.

The Conservative party is consumed by mythology. During one of our debates on a Social Security Bill, we were told about a book called "The Myth of the Scrounger". I have heard one member of the No Turning Back group—the loony right—cite the women who deliberately becomes pregnant in order to obtain a council house; in the 1920s, the current mythology involved a women in a fur coat, travelling in a limousine from unemployment office to unemployment office. The entire political ideology of the Conservatives is fed by such myths, but no one has mentioned that in the context of the Bill.

Although it is brief, the Bill is very nasty. It is as loathsome as any of the other 13 Social Security Bills introduced by the present Government. Let us examine the effect that it will have on various earnings bands. Since SSP was introduced in April 1983, there have been a number of changes, but those proposed in this Bill and the accompanying package will be far the most significant. An example is the SSP rates that will be received by people whose earnings are between £60 and £200 a week in 1991-92, and those received by people with comparable earnings in 1983-84. I am assuming that earnings have doubled in that time. Someone earning £100 a week in 1991-92 will receive 43·5 per cent. of those earnings in SSP; the same person earning £50 a week in 1983-84 would have received 67 per cent. Hon. Members should ponder those figures: they represent an enormous cut.

We are talking about people whose employers have already cheated them with low pay. The biggest losses have been suffered by those who are now earning between £90 and £180 a week, which covers a wide range of low-paid work: average full-time weekly pay is now over £200.

In his October uprating statement, the Secretary of State was rather more cautious. He said:

"more than 90 per cent. of the work force now work for employers providing this cover"—[*Official Report*, 24 October 1990; Vol. 178, c. 349.]

"The Way Ahead" was a little less discreet. I ask the Minister of State to try, in his reply, to re-establish its credibility—if it ever had any. The rationale has been destroyed.

Contrary to what the Secretary of State has said, SSP is of crucial importance to most employees, especially the low-paid; yet they have been hit hardest by the cuts. For many of them in 1991 SSP, as a proportion of earnings, will be worth little more than half what it was worth in 1983. That makes nonsense of the Government's claims about targeting resources on the low paid: in fact, they are targeting the cuts on the low paid. Every time they target their tax handouts, however, we know that they will hit a bull's eye.

This is a shabby Bill. It continues the theft of money, jobs and self-esteem from people with disabilities and people on low pay. Low-paid workers are being thrown into the insecurity of cut-price schemes, and pushed away from the security of Government schemes.

6.24 pm

Dr. John G. Blackburn (Dudley, West): Let me begin by paying a warm and generous tribute to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the manner in which he introduced the Bill. Conservative Members feel a great respect for the honesty and brevity that he has exercised within its confines.

I will not sit in the Chamber and hear the Bill described as "theft", "loathsome" and "deceitful". I happen to believe that many of its provisions will, by their very nature, be attractive to the working population. Having listened with much care to what has been said, I also find it difficult to accept that the rights of 15 million workers will be eroded.

I would dispute many of the points made by the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher), to whom I listened very intently, but I shall centre my comments on that absurdly exaggerated figure of 15 million. I say that as a fully paid-up member of the same trade union of which the hon. Gentleman is a member. The statutory sick pay scheme certainly imposes a considerable burden on employers; it may well be complex and expensive to operate, particularly for small companies. However, it brings stability to small businesses, because the Government reimburse sickness benefits.

We have heard that there is only one winner—the Treasury. What blatant nonsense. It has been agreed on both sides of the House—I am seeking common ground—that SSP savings are being used to give help where it is needed most.

As is clear from the statement made by my right hon. Friend on 24 October, it is without challenge that a further £200 million will go to pensioners, in real terms. Let me say—theologically—"Amen to that." A further £235 million will go to residential care, and an additional £350 million to families. My hon. Friend the Member for Taunton (Mr. Nicholson), who is not in the Chamber now, rightly pointed out that we are talking about a budget that is—within the terms of social security—breathtaking: a budget of £63 billion a year, including the further £3 billion announced in the autumn statement.

For a few moments, I should like to talk not about the Bill but about its effects. I have sat here since the beginning of the debate, and I have heard many figures, a good deal of rhetoric and much scoring of political points.

I am more interested in people than in politics. Once we lose our vision about people we lose everything. I speak soberly from recent experiences. I believe passionately in the concept of more and more benefits and money going to the long-term ill and disabled. I am completely committed to the national health service and I am humbled by the fact that I have been in six cardiac units at six different hospitals in the past year. By the grace of God and by the nursing skills of the health service I stand to speak in this debate. I have seen at first hand the problems of people who have open heart surgery, transplants and other cardiac-related surgery. In the quietness of my soul I know that I have a responsibility to those people to say that the Government should give more. I know that as a result of this small measure resources will go in that direction. It is a testimony to any Government who care about the long-term sick and disabled.

I am entitled to reflect that when I gave what was probably my second speech in this honourable House I was savaged by Labour Members. They reminded me forcefully that the constituency that I have the honour to represent, Dudley in the west midlands, had the highest infant mortality rate of 26·2 per 1,000 live births. I was ashamed to inherit that record. As a result of education, increased medical care, the introduction of a district general hospital and, by tonight, an improvement in maternity benefits, the figure is below the national average. I am grateful to this Government for showing care and compassion to the women in my constituency who are pregnant and giving birth to the next generation. All hon. Members—I make no distinction between us—are here because we have a vision about people, and it is one that I share.

I was simply overwhelmed by the comments of the hon. Member for Oldham, West about the provision of statutory sick pay in the private sector. I listened intently and three times he said that these provisions cover only managing directors. What blatant nonsense.

Mr. Battle: Nobody said that. Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Blackburn: I shall most certainly give way.

Mr. Battle: Will the hon. Gentleman reflect on what he has just said? Nobody has suggested that the schemes are only for managing directors. We suggested that the schemes for companies would not necessarily cover all employees, not least because exclusion clauses will rule out most people in firms of fewer than 10 employees. Is not that true?

Dr. Blackburn: I was most happy to give way to the hon. Gentleman, but the suggestion was made three times. I shall not enter into a conflict with him because there is much in what he says about exclusion clauses meaning that provision may not cover all people.

Ms. Short: I am grateful to my fellow west midlander for giving way. May I clarify the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle)? In response to my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West, the Minister and other hon. Members said that we had made such an allegation. The Government claim that 90 per cent. of British employees work for employers who provide an occupational sick pay scheme. Our point is that, although two or three employees in a firm may be included in such a scheme, the rest may not be, yet they would be included in the Government's figures. My hon. Friend gave the extreme example of a firm that provided only for the managing director, yet the whole firm was

[Ms. Short]

included in the Government's statistics. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman would wish to understand that and would not wish to mislead the House on that point.

Dr. Blackburn: Can the House imagine a reputable company engaged in providing these financial services not embracing the whole company, even if it was only for business, never mind anything else? I hold fast to the view that it would be in the company's interests and the interests of the company that produces the prospectus to include the entire company in a comprehensive scheme, rather than to take in two, three or four only.

I can go further. Of the companies with which I have had professional dealings in the west midlands—they are recorded in the Register of Members' Interests—not one does not have a comprehensive scheme for everybody. I readily concede that it is difficult to operate a scheme from the moment a man or woman takes up employment. There is usually a probationary period of three months.

There is tremendous scope for people in industry to make provision through the private sector. That is good, provided that the facility exists and the incentive is given. It is up to the Government to ensure that there is adequate provision of that facility throughout the working population, almost as of right, providing that the finances can stand it.

The Bill is not only commendable but, in the final analysis, will be welcomed. I was delighted that the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) paid me the great compliment of saying that I shared with her the honour of representing a constituency in the west midlands.

Let me speak from personal experience. Wherever I go, I want to pay tribute to disabled people who, in some ways, have been attacked tonight. No word against those people will ever escape my lips. The disabled are worthy of more than commendation. I visit many offices and factories in my constituency and in greater Birmingham generally and I am always humbled when I see the achievements of disabled people who have climbed to the very top in their chosen career. To do that requires loyalty, skill and talent, and disabled people have all those attributes, which employers find very attractive.

Mr. Battle: Oh.

Dr. Blackburn: The hon. Gentleman has made his speech and he has made his point and now, in all modesty, I am making mine.

I am impressed by the standing of disabled people in my area. I have seen working at Birmingham airport a disabled man more gifted and talented than many who are marvellously fit. Similarly, I have seen disabled people working at hospitals and for companies who have made me want to salute the disabled people of the west midlands.

One figure that is not in dispute is the average of 15 working days a year lost through sickness, and I have no doubt that that is a perfectly acceptable figure. I do not for one moment depart from the argument that cover should be available. What I have argued—with sincerity, strength and dedication, I hope—is that I have a passionate interest in the welfare of the long-term sick and disabled. I salute both those groups of people and I know that, one day, they will reflect on the Bill and be glad that we passed it because of the extra resources that it will give to those who really need it. That is why I have no hesitation in supporting t Bill. It is the easiest thing that I have ever done in my li When I walk through the Lobby, I shall have in my mi a vision of the sick and disabled people, as well as t pregnant ladies in my constituency, who will benefit fro its provisions. I wish the Bill godspeed.

6.34 pm

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): I welcor the remarks by the hon. Member for Dudley, West (D Blackburn) about the way in which he has benefited ov the past year from the health service. Judging by l comments tonight, he is now in very good health.

The Bill is short and admirably clear, although I fe that its provisions will be damaging both to employees a to employers. The Secretary of State claimed that the B did not pose any threat or bring any disadvantage employees, yet the examples from citizens advice burea reports, given by the hon. Member for Oldham, West (M Meacher), clearly showed that, in a number of cases, t operation of the statutory sick pay regime h disadvantaged employees.

The hon. Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls), wh is no longer with us, dismissed those examples by sayi that they referred only to bad employers. When the ho Gentleman was an Employment Minister, we served two Committees considering Employment Bills, and I c well remember that that was one of his favour arguments. If one followed that argument to its logic conclusion, however, one would have to say that we d not need the criminal law because murderers were only small proportion of the population. The measures that t hon. Gentleman introduced in his Employment Bi played into the hands of bad employers and gave the further material and further opportunities. Similarl many of us fear that the Bill will give those who have n been good employers—especially in the operation of SS —an incentive to continue as poor employers.

The CABs have not been alone in commenting on t announcement by the Secretary of State in October. T Disability Alliance, for example, said that the cut reimbursement of statutory sick pay would aggravate t problem of non-payment by small employers. We may talking about only a small minority, but a growing numb of employees have expressed their concern that they ha been unfairly treated in the operation of SSP, and t House should not do anything to encourage such unfa treatment.

The hon. Member for Teignbridge argued th employers do not go out in search of sick and unhealth people. But it is not so much a question of who one brin on to one's books. During a recession, employers may looking for redundancies and, leaving aside the possibili of unfair dismissal, those with a poor health profile m well be top of the list. That trend will be encouraged employers are made to pay more for such people wh they are sick.

Despite the claims of the Secretary of State, the Bill m have damaging consequences for employees or potenti employees. It will also be damaging for employers particularly those in small businesses. I shall not repeat the reasons given by the National Federation of S Employed and Small Businesses for its belief that the B

will be disadvantageous to those whom it represents, especially as the hon. Member for Oldham, West has already placed a number of them on record.

One of the most important causes for concern is that the provisions have been introduced without consultation. The Government are changing a system agreed after long and hard bargaining in the early 1980s. The Government's original proposals did not envisage any reimbursement. It was only after tough negotiations that the present position was reached.

Ms. Short: Perhaps the speed with which the Bill is being introduced can be explained in terms of the history of these matters and of the employers' campaign which forced the Government to be more generous in their reimbursement arrangements. We are debating the Second Reading on Monday and, on Wednesday, the remaining stages are to be debated—most unusually—on the Floor of the House. That timetable has been deliberately designed to prevent employers' organisations from mobilising to get back what they have won on previous occasions.

Mr. Wallace: That may well be the reason. The timetable is certainly unusual. Whereas we shall have had six hours or more to debate the Second Reading of the Bill, detailed consideration and Report are to be afforded even less.

The president of the National Federation of Self Employed and Small Businesses, Mr. Bill Knox, is reported to have said:

"On the introduction of SSP we were promised that although we would be obliged to accept the cost of administering the scheme we would not have to fund it. We are bitter that the Government now appears to be reneging on what we considered to be a 'cast-iron contract'."

We are concerned not only that—certainly in the eyes of small business men—the Government are going back on an agreement. The Bill will enable them further to reduce the rate at which they will reimburse employers for amounts paid in statutory sick pay. The Secretary of State was pressed on that point, and obviously he would not give an undertaking that it would never happen. If that was the case, he would not have included a provision in the Bill to allow him to alter the rates. Having experienced what they would consider to be a breach of promise or of good faith on the Government's part, employers fear that there will be further such breaches and that the percentage might decline from 80 per cent. to 60 per cent. or to 40 per cent.

I listened carefully to the Secretary of State when he responded to the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher). The right hon. Gentleman said that other priorities and pressures on the social security budget would have to be taken into account. I would not necessarily take issue about that. However, the Secretary of State made great play of the fact that, in many respects, this proposal could be considered neutral, in that what was being lost by the business community was being made up in terms of relief in national insurance contributions.

If other priorities are to be considered, further cuts could perhaps take place without any compensating changes in national insurance contributions. Although there will be compensating changes on 1 April 1991, how long will that last? It is fair enough to say that there will be an offset in year one, but will that continue into years two, three and four? The financial memorandum refers to the sum of £250 million, comprising £180 million in the first year, as what will not be recovered in compensating payments by employers, and £70 million which cannot be claimed back in terms of the 7 per cent. national insurance contribution when statutory sick pay is paid.

The figures balance out in terms of what is given back as national insurance contributions. If that is the case, why in the world did the Government bother? If one side is to be balanced out by the other, why bother with this proposal, which will obviously cause aggro for small businesses and for the Confederation of British Industry which represents big business? It will place pressure on business at a time when it is being asked to cut costs.

Although the figures appear to balance out in arithmetical terms and the Secretary of State could give us specific examples of business that would benefit, it does not necessarily follow that the proposal will be a general benefit to the business community. The fact that some businesses will benefit means that others will not.

According to the Green Paper entitled "Income during initial sickness: a new strategy", published in the early 1980s, which contained the original proposals for SSP, there was to be a flat-rate scheme of statutory sick pay, and employers were to be reimbursed or at least offset by a reduction of 0·6 per cent. in national insurance contributions liability. There was also to be a 50 per cent. reimbursement for small businesses. That proposal was considered by the Select Committee on Social Services in 1980-81, and it stated:

"whilst the reduction in national insurance liability will be approximately proportional to payroll costs, the liability to pay ESSP will be far less evenly spread. Industries, occupations or regions with higher than average rates of sickness will have relatively greater costs under ESSP."

There are obviously higher rates of sickness and injury in the construction industry, in mining and, regrettably, in agriculture. Regrettably, people in Scotland and the north of England do not have such good health as people elsewhere.

The Government have tried to portray the proposal as neutral for the business community, but it is clear that many businesses will find it damaging. The hon. Member for Surry, North-West (Mr. Grylls) suggested that there should be a two-tier system. If that was the case, small businesses with fewer than 20 employees could continue to have better benefits and a higher rate of reimbursement. In the 48 hours before the Committee stage of this Bill, I hope that the Government will consider that proposal.

Many small businesses that employ a small number of people do not have the resources to adopt private sick pay schemes. Undoubtedly some businesses will be in the "can pay, won't pay" category, but many small businesses are in the "can't pay, won't pay" category. It is not to their discredit that they cannot take on that obligation: they simply do not have the resources to do so. While the Secretary of State made great play of the fact that it is important that the private sector is encouraged to make provision for employees when sick—we would all endorse that as a good objective—many small businesses cannot attain that objective, yet the Government are placing this extra burden on small businesses with regard to the provision of the state insurance sector.

Small businesses have been hit by the uniform business rate and increases in the rate of inflation, and they must administer the arrestment of their employees' wages under the poll tax. They now have this additional burden to bear. A number of studies have shown that the cost of tax

[Mr. Wallace]

compliance bears more heavily in relative terms on small businesses than on big business, which usually has a large personnel organisation to deal with such matters.

The Minister responsible for small businesses has not been present for this debate. When I asked him a question during Employment Question Time two weeks ago about the effect of the uniform business rate, he quite properly said that it was a matter for the Department of the Environment. We are now discussing an issue which affects small businesses, but it appears to be a matter for Social Security Ministers and not a matter for the Minister responsible for small businesses. Many of us regret the fact that there is no co-ordination in the Government over how they treat the small business sector. There should be a Minister of Cabinet rank with overall responsibility for co-ordinating the small business sector, as happened during the Lib-Lab pact in 1977-78.

The Bill is unusual, because it penalises both employers and employees. That is no mean achievement for a small Bill but, because of that, we will oppose it in the Division Lobby tonight.

6.57 pm

Mr. James Cran (Beverley): I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security on one of the most lucid expositions of a subject that very few people understand. I have no intention of bandying statistics with my right hon. Friend because he showed the Opposition perfectly well that he knew the logic of his position much better than they did.

The logic of my right hon. Friend's position is perfectly clear to me and I followed it easily. Whether I agreed with all parts of it is another matter. I believe that the proposals in the Bill are relatively innocuous, although, of course, the representative bodies involved would not say that. Those bodies are concerned because if such propositions can be put to us today, they might face a position similar to that which arose over redundancy payments. Consequently, the business community and employees want to know the Government's future intentions. I do not necessarily expect to hear chapter and verse about this tonight, but a nod and a wink from the Minister who is to reply will do.

I know that the very difficult case of small businesses has been outlined in this debate. Hon. Members on both sides of the Chamber have made the case eloquently, although some Opposition Members exaggerated it. When trying to influence any Government it is important not to exaggerate—but that is precisely what the National Federation of Self Employed and Small Businesses has done: exaggerated the effects of the proposals to such an extent that no reasonable person could accept the logic of its position. If such organisations were more reasonable in future when commenting on Government legislation their representations may be more successful.

I want to examine the logic of the position even though it has been outlined before, because repetition is no bad thing when an important principle is involved. I started with the Secretary of State's press release of 24 October. In eloquent and winning language he said that he wanted a sensible new balance between the state and employers. I have heard that before many times—sometimes I have accepted the idea in question, sometimes not.

The alarm bells sounded not when I heard submis from representative bodies, but when I heard companies in my constituency. Generally speaking are not large; there are many small companies there correct that many—generally large—companies expanding the cover that they provide in the for occupational sick pay schemes, and we certainly wa encourage that. Once we have encouraged them r more than we have so far, that will be the time to extending these proposals. If I concede, however, that should be brought in now, they should certainly n extended.

I do not necessarily accept the proposition occupational sick pay schemes are increasingly us small companies in my constituency—they are not, do the Government expect these companies, many of marginal companies that do not make the sort of p that financial companies in the City make, to appl proposals? The Secretary of State could not rule ou possibility that some of them will be adversely affecte course they will be——

Ms. Short: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that, Government claim that the effect on companies is ne —they will lose £250 million but get it back in anothe —it is unbelievable that they would have brought i legislation unless they intended over time continua cut the proportion of rebate paid to employers? could do that under the Bill without even needi affirmative resolution of the House.

Mr. Cran: I well understand what the hon. La saying but it would be uncharacteristic of me to myself to be dragged into agreeing with her. I do not for the simple reason that I believe that this meas relatively innocuous; it is what might happen i Government decide to amend it in future years worries me. As they stand, the proposals are l neutral, but they will not remain so if the Goverr keep developing the policy in the way that I fea might.

I am moderately surprised—although I may hav wrong—that the Government did not seek represent on this point. In my simple view of life, it is always listening to all points of view. Sometimes the uncomfortable, sometimes they are the opposite of one believes, but the Government must always opinions.

Finance directors in my constituency have told m if the Government ask companies to spend comp money, that must be worth representations. I agree. was that not done? I heard the Secretary of Stat something about it, but I fear that I did not hear

The companies in my constituency are worried be the principle that the Government should reim companies 100 per cent. has been broken. Compani the cost of administration, and they are perfectly hap do so, but 100 per cent. reimbursement is nec because the principle is that companies are not in c of sickness—they do not cause their employees' sic Employees become ill for a variety of reasons, u related to medical factors, not to factors to do wi company. This measure does not recognise that industries and establishments have higher sickness

than others, again for a variety of reasons. If I have misunderstood this aspect I shall be more than delighted to be reassured of that later.

It will come as no surprise to learn that what worries me is the movement from 100 per cent. to 80 per cent.—in itself relatively harmless, as I told the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short). Changes in national insurance contributions, worth about £250 million in 1991-92, cover it. But companies are worried about the signal that that sends about the Government's intentions.

After three years in this place I have started to learn—one learns every day here—to read Bills rather more carefully. That is clearly the secret of success in this place. Clause 1(2) is a case in point. It contains a provision further to vary the 80 per cent. figure. I think that most hon. Members would accept that I am a trusting soul, but equally I can claim not to be daft, and I have an awful feeling, as do the companies in my constituency that I have consulted, that the Government cannot possibly intend to increase the percentage from 80 to 90 or 95 at some point. Again, I am happy to be corrected on that point, but it is probable that the 80 per cent. will be reduced at some stage to 60 per cent.

Perhaps this will parallel the slow death of redundancy rebates—I am sure that we all remember them.

Ms. Short *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Cran: The hon. Member for Ladywood nods, but I agreed with the Government about those rebates because companies cause their own redundancies, so it was perfectly logical of the Government to decide that companies should pay for them. However, as I have said, the same does not apply to sickness. The Government must recognise that. If sickness is caused by an employer, the health and safety legislation exists to prosecute the employer for it.

I have discovered that statutory sick pay will cost the Government £955 million in 1991-92, and—if I have understood it correctly, I fear that this Bill will surreptitiously and elegantly, pass this entire burden to companies in the fulness of time. We can all argue about when there will be a downturn or an upturn in the economy. However, such a bill passed over to companies will deter investment when we want to see more. It will also affect the profitability of companies and none of us would like to see that.

If my assumptions are correct, this could be a potentially heavy burden—I emphasise "potentially"—for some businesses. The Government should listen to those businesses. I have attempted to rehearse the downside of the proposals, but I have not exaggerated them. If the Government go no further than 80 per cent. I see no difficulty with the proposals. If the Government hint that they are prepared to move from 80 per cent. and ask employers to carry much more of the burden, and eventually all of it, there will be problems. I hope that I am entirely wrong. I should be delighted to be proved wrong and merely seek reassurance. I hope that I get it.

7.10 pm

Mr. John Battle (Leeds, West): We have had two interesting and contrasting speeches from Conservative Members. The hon. Member for Dudley, West (Dr. Blackburn) gave us a panegyric, especially on behalf of the disabled, and suggested that the Bill would be celebrated because it marked an increase in resources. That is not the case; the Bill spells out how much will be saved. The hon. Member for Beverley (Mr. Cran) suggested that the proposals should not be lavishly welcomed. I think he said that we should treat them as innocuous and that at present they were at best neutral. He expressed the reservation that they could be damaging in future and he referred to the clause which suggests that the contribution may be reduced even further. If the Bill receives its Second Reading perhaps he will move an amendment in Committee to delete the phrase

"any greater or lesser percentage."

That phrase is ambiguous and means that the contribution could be increased or reduced in future.

We strongly argue that the thrust of the Government's policy in this short Bill is to reduce the contribution by the state and push the burden on to the employer. In the long term employees will have to pay the price for that. Conservative Members say that our claims are exaggerated. We have been here before and been accused of that. We were told that our fears about the poll tax and the uniform business rate were exaggerated. Nearly a year ago to this day there was another social security Bill dealing with the availability for work tests. We were told at that time that our fears were exaggerated.

The Minister for Social Security and Disabled People is in his place. In Committee I suggested to him that the Bill dealing with the availability for work tests would cause great hardship because when people applied for a job they would be forced to accept the lowest rate of pay on offer. The Minister will remember that when I challenged him about that he did not believe the rates of pay being offered in my constituency. He seemed to think that they were much nearer the national average of £268 a week. However, in some jobs people were paid about £1 an hour. I seem to remember that he checked the figures. The effects of that Bill are precisely as we predicted. As unemployment rises in my constituency wage rates are again dropping.

We were accused of exaggerating the reality of poverty until the figures were slipped out just before the summer recess. One of the primary causes of poverty in our society is low pay, and we should read the Bill in that context. The explanatory and financial memorandum to the Bill makes the savings plain. It states:

"Clause 1 will produce savings in public expenditure of £181m in 1991-92, rising to £190m in 1992-93 and £197m in 1993-94."

The word "savings" is a Government euphemism for cuts in public expenditure. Clause 1 will reduce from 100 to 80 per cent. the statutory sick pay that employers can recover from their remittances of national insurance contributions.

This is the second year running that the Government have reduced statutory sick pay for low-paid workers—last year it was by £80 million. As a result, 4·9 million workers lost their entire entitlement to the higher rate of statutory sick pay. That is one in five of the work force. When the changes in the Bill are combined with the decision in October's uprating statement to raise the threshold for the lower rate of statutory sick pay from its current level of £125 to £185 and the proposal to freeze the higher rate at its current level of £52·50, they will bring to the Treasury a saving of a further £100 million.

In the uprating statement, the Secretary of State called this "restructuring". In moving the Second Reading of the

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present Bill, he used that word again. When we in areas such as Leeds which have depended on a manufacturing base hear such a word, it suggests cuts, reductions and redundancies in the work force. "Restructuring" is a euphemism for cuts.

Perhaps the Secretary of State had to find from somewhere the money for the token increase in child benefit for the first born. It has been taken from statutory sick pay. The Bill is about withdrawing the role of the state. The Government are ambiguous about that and are not quite clear where they stand. They ask whether the state should have a role or whether it should be pushed back to the employer and the employee. That is the thrust of the Bill. They are again pushing forward the make-the-people-pay principle—make them pay 20 per cent. minimum of the poll tax; make them pay at least 20 per cent. of their housing benefit. Now the Government want to make the employers pay 20 per cent. of statutory sick pay.

The impact of this so-called restructuring on employees was spelt out in a reply in *Hansard* on 12 November. According to the Government, about 3 million employees with earnings of between £125 and £185 a week will be pushed down to the lower rate of statutory sick pay. They will no longer be eligible for the higher rate. A wage of £125 is well below the Council of Europe's decency threshold of £178.91 a week. Will Conservative Members, with their great new approach to Europe under a new leader, acknowledge that Council of Europe threshold? In the meantime, people who fall sick on or after 6 April next year will be pushed to the lower rate if their wages are within that bracket. In practice they will lose £9 a week.

The failure to raise the higher rate will result in a loss of £5·70 a week for those earning £175 or more. As we know, it is estimated that 60 per cent. of such people are women. The Government make much of the fact that families need to have two earners, and we have had debates about it. A woman who works to provide a much-needed second income to pay the family's poll tax or to make up for the reduction in child benefit and who is not covered, will be subjected to means testing. If the husband is working she can apply for income support, but she has no chance of getting it. There will be no cover for the income that is lost. The Government cannot deny that such families will suffer a loss of income.

Those earning below £46 a week are unable to claim statutory sick pay. When people face a shift not simply from employment to unemployment but from relatively secure work to temporary, part-time and low-paid work, the impact of the Bill will be greater than the Government are letting on. People with disabilities are more likely to be working part time and in lower-graded occupations. They are also the ones most likely to be excluded from the private schemes and so dependent entirely on the state scheme. As soon as the Bill passes through the House, it will lead to further withdrawal of state responsibility, with a resulting increase in hardship and insecurity for the most vulnerable people in work. It will force disabled people to work for low wages. Others will stand to lose their long-term incapacity benefit.

Employers will face an increase in administration costs on top of the uniform business rate, high interest rates and the rest. If the Bill goes through, it will encourage discrimination against those with severe disabilities employers will stop recruiting them. Too few of them already employed, so how will the Bill give emplo incentives to be more progressive in employing people disabilities? It will encourage employers to go in opposite direction.

Conservative Members say that the Nati Federation of Self Employed and Small Business exaggerating, but I notice that it has said that it opp the Bill not least on the ground that the Government b an agreement about consulting it. That should have t place before Second Reading. Furthermore, the federa said:

"96 per cent. of British businesses employ less than 20 pe and do not have the resources to take on their emplo health insurance. That is why National Insurance was introduced."

I suspect that that is why the Government are trying to out of the system of national insurance. They are tryin privatise the state benefit provision. This is back-d privatisation of the welfare state.

The Government try to justify what they are doin the basis of the report commissioned by the DSS. T claim that it shows that the vast majority of workers covered by private occupational schemes. However, detail of the report shows that 44 per cent. of all pri sector firms and 55 per cent. of firms with fewer tha employees, which accounts for 75 per cent. of firms, no scheme. Does that show that 91 per cent. of emplo are covered by private schemes?

Furthermore, even in firms where some occupati scheme exists, coverage is far from universal because employees most commonly affected by exclusion cla are those working part time in the lower grades and on wages. Nearly one in two schemes have exclusion cla relating to the length of service and the hours of worl other words, 72 per cent. of employees may be affecte those exclusions, so they have extremely limited cove

Beveridge wanted the national insurance schem provide a fully comprehensive scheme from the crad the grave, based on the actuarial principle that people in contributions and then got help when they needed difficult circumstances. The Government have m away from that fully comprehensive principle and trying to enforce on the people a back-door, third p fire and theft coverage, on the basis that the pers premium is the absolute minimum. If one cannot af the full premium because one is sick or ill—the reason the system was invented in the first place—one will no full coverage. We cannot treat people in the labour ma like second-hand cars, providing the minimum assistance for those likely to break down. What is wor that, if it is not their fault, they stand to lose out altoge

There is a group in the Lobby at the moment—the Turning Back group—which is looking for a champio defend Thatcherism. The fact that the main architect been deposed means that there is a danger of the w project going. That project was spelt out in Septemb a pamphlet published by the group. A chapter he "The Withering Away of the State"—says:

"Our purpose should be to wean people off welfare advocate the systematic reform of the welfare system into based on insurance—run on a private agency system . should be a privately managed insurance-based system g people maximum protection and opportunity . . . Nothi our proposals would affect the benefits paid as of rig disabled people."

The group is obviously a little sensitive about disabled people, but the system and principles are clear. It would dismantle the whole of the welfare state and make people take out private insurance to cover the times when they lose their jobs or are struck down by illness.

At the heart of the Bill, and of the clause to which the hon. Member for Beverley referred, is democracy. When the hon. Member spoke about the potential in the Bill for changing the system to make it even harsher, and reducing the contributions even further from 80 per cent. he did not spell out the way in which the legislation will be changed. The Secretary of State will have the power to alter the percentage rate without a proper parliamentary debate. It is all right for the Secretary of State to say that there has been a shift from affirmative to negative orders. The Bill is paving the way for future detailed reductions in the level of state reimbursement for employees, which can be passed without proper parliamentary scrutiny.

The Bill is a clear signal that the Government are intent on their project of withdrawing from state provision and of dismantling the welfare state. It is not good enough that they have taken money from the poor and redistributed it to the rich. The principles of the national insurance scheme and the welfare state have been fundamentally undermined. Conservative Members may claim that I am exaggerating, but I refer them to what happened when we debated the poll tax, the availability for work test and the poverty figures that Conservative Members denied for months.

This time, it will not be good enough for the Secretary of State to offer, in answer to questions from his hon. Friends, a fundamental review. Three people out in the Lobby are offering fundamental review of the poll tax, but it is too late for that because millions of people have paid the price. Before millions of people pay the price for this Bill, I urge the House to reject it and make the Government change track.

7.28 pm

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): The hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) is worried about the No Turning Back group, but from his speech, it is obvious that he is a member of the no turning forward group. I recommend that he reads *The Independent* of today, which has on page 3 an article headed:

"Kinnock seen as liability by colleagues".

Until the Labour party gets round to having a leadership election, it is condemned to being a no turning forward group.

The hon. Gentleman's speech was entirely in favour of the nanny state. He said that he was concerned about withdrawal of state responsibility, and he said that without any regard to the fact that people want to have some responsibility for their lives. Employers want to accept more responsibility for their employees. Many more people are self-employed now than there ever were when the Labour party was in office. That is because people want to accept that responsibility. The hon. Gentleman should not condemn people for wanting to do that, but he seems to think that they have to turn to the state for their care because they cannot provide for themselves. He is mistaken to look at it in that way. People want to have more responsibility in their hands and do not want to have to depend on the state to anything like the extent that they had to in the past.

The hon. Gentleman talked about cuts in public expenditure, but there have been enormous increases to £200 billion. He talked about cuts in the work force, but there are 27·5 million people in work. How can he talk about cuts when a record number of people are in work?

Mr. Battle: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that the increase in the work force reflects an increase in part-time, temporary and low-paid work? That is the reason why the Government claim that the employment market has increased. In reality, it is not an increase. Unemployment is rising.

Mr. Thurnham: The hon. Gentleman said that the primary cause of poverty is low pay, but he is wrong. The worst cause of poverty is unemployment. Only the Labour party would prefer people to be unemployed rather than in part-time work if they want to take it. The hon. Gentleman should not condemn people if they want part-time work. People from days of old would probably think that most people now are in part-time work as they work only 40 hours a week. Circumstances change. The hon. Gentleman should look ahead and not imagine that everything is as it was when the Labour party was in power.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): Does my hon. Friend agree that probably the commonest pattern for women with children returning to the work force is that they choose to work a certain number of hours while their children are small, gradually increasing those hours as their children become more self-sufficient, until eventually they are extremely well placed to take a full-time job?

Mr. Thurnham: I could not agree more. One should look at part-time jobs as a way to help people to move into full-time jobs if that is what they are looking for.

I apologise for having missed part of the debate. I am sorry, but I had to leave the Chamber briefly to attend a meeting of the group Exodus, which campaigns for mentally handicapped children to move out of institutional mental hospitals into the community. The thrust of the Bill is about facing up to priorities and reallocating resources where needs are greatest, and that is an example of the way in which one wishes resources to be reallocated.

Ms. Short: I want to take the hon. Gentleman back to when protection for low-paid workers was being reduced. He said that unemployment was the worst possible cause of poverty for anyone. We are going into a period of rising unemployment. Does the hon. Gentleman stand by his statement that, rather than having unemployment, it would be better if Britain were one great big sweatshop, with low pay for virtually everyone?

Mr. Thurnham: If the hon. Lady looks at my speeches, she will see that I spoke about the country being a wealth shop. We should be concerned about the creation of wealth. Only Labour Members would rather that people were out of work than in work. Most people would prefer to be in work and creating wealth rather than out of work. I refer the hon. Lady to my speeches on that subject if she wants to see what I have said. She pressed my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State about the number of people who were included in schemes, rather than merely working for employers who had schemes. That is a spurious line to follow.

Mr. Quentin Davies (Stamford and Spalding): On the vital matter of unemployment, is my hon. Friend aware that the Labour party has come out with a proposal for a statutory minimum wage? That would inevitably knock many people out of jobs and increase unemployment to a higher level than it might otherwise have been. Is my hon. Friend aware that, according to some calculations, 750,000 people would be needlessly thrown out of their jobs by that pernicious proposal?

Mr. Thurnham: That is typical of what the Opposition say without paying proper attention to what will happen. I refer them to the time when Barbara Castle, now Lady Castle, was Secretary of State for Employment and Productivity. She looked into the matter and produced a report saying that that proposal would lead to massive unemployment, particularly in the regions and Northern Ireland.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Will the hon. Gentleman explain why this country, alone of all the EEC countries, does not have minumum wage provisions or standards? Why can the Germans, French and Italians all believe that it is possible to have minimum wage provisions, but this country cannot? If this country were much more successful than all the rest, I could understand it, but as Britain is undoubtedly the sick man of Europe in economic terms, obviously the hon. Gentleman's argument does not bear examination.

Mr. Thurnham: Britain was the sick man of Europe when the Labour party was in power. It is no longer the sick man of Europe because we do not have legislation that stops people working. The legislation about which the hon. Gentleman spoke would stop people working. It is not really applied in those other countries anyway—it is only a fiction—because it stops people working. Only the Labour party wants to put people out of work. I see it as a progression—if people can start at a low rate, they can progress up the ladder. If we stop them starting at that lower rate, we stop them proceeding up the ladder.

The hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) asked in an intervention in the speech by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State how many employees were included in schemes, rather than merely employed by firms that provided the cover of a scheme. That is a spurious question. It is illusory. The question cannot be answered in the terms that the hon. Lady wants. New employees are not usually covered by those schemes. A period of three, six or perhaps 12 months must elapse before such people can qualify. Part-time employees are generally excluded—they may be employed by more than one employer.

Most of all, the hon. Lady's question does not stand up because private firms generally use discretion. I declare an interest in that I am a small employer. I am concerned about the Bill and the effect on small employers. The difference between private and public employers is that private employers use their discretion and, where they can see that they should help their employees through a period of sickness, they will generally do so. Only in the public sector and in the local authorities mentioned in the report by the Audit Commission—which the Labour party wants to abolish—are there automatic "free days" when one does not need a sickness certificate. Private firms do not go in for that. They judge each case on its merits, as they should.

Mr. Eric Martlew (Carlisle): The hon. Gen comments amuse me a little. For more than 20 worked for a private company, which obviously like the firm owned by the hon. Gentleman. It did at an individual to see whether he had blue eyes to decide whether to give him sick pay. My firm n sick pay conditions with the employees and t unions, and sick pay was a right for all employ hon. Gentleman advocates giving sick pay to the c sick, like the policy of giving to the deserving p pay is not about charity. It is about entitleme civilised country.

Mr. Thurnham: We want to work towards a s which there is greater responsibility—more indivi able to accept responsibility and more employers to accept responsibility for their employees. We n 3 million people who are self-employed and who c accept that responsibility.

In a recent article in *The Sunday Times*, the Ch of the Exchequer, my right hon. Friend the Me Huntingdon (Mr. Major)—who may soon be lead Conservative party—listed the factors by which h new proposals. He said that he asked himself six q about any proposed legislative change:

"Would it enlarge freedom and extend opportu
Would it make producers and provide accountable and responsive to consumers?
Would it encourage people to take more resp for their own lives?
Would it improve life for the worst-off in soci
Would its effects be environmentally sound?
Would it enable individuals to make the m contribution to society?"

The Bill stands up well by those yardsticks.

Ms. Short: It does not.

Mr. Thurnham: Yes, it does. It encourages peo more responsible and helps to allocate resources w need is greatest.

The Bill's costs have been explained to us. The a movement from 100 per cent. to 80 per cent., w cost employers £250 million. That will be offse reduction in national insurance contributions, w right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said wou close to £250 million. The major change is the £10 saved by freezing the higher rate of statutory sick raising the threshold. About £100 million is because of the change.

The change affects those with the higher incomes, not those with the lower band of incor Opposition say, wrongly, that it affects people on t incomes. However, it makes money availa distribution in areas where the need is greatest. hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security and People is responsible for the independent livi which now costs more than £60 million. That is an of where resources are being reallocated. W establish priorities and then decide where the greatest.

The Opposition are always quick to cond Government for doing too little too late, for bein and so on. The Government have introduced a shows where resources can be made available. Th be some limit on resourses. Even if the Oppositio Government, they would have to accept a

resources. It is a question of how those resources are allocated, and the Bill is effective in the way in which it tackles that.

Mr. Battle *rose*——

Mr. Thurnham: We are having quite a lively debate.

Mr. Battle: Does the hon. Gentleman seriously believe that £175 a week is a high wage? How does he contrast that with the tax benefits in recent Budgets for people earning more than £2,000 a week?

Mr. Thurnham: We are talking about different bands. The figure that the hon. Gentleman mentioned relates to the higher band. The Bill fully protects those in the lower bands from inflation. The £100 million available because of the changes comes from the higher band—mainly people in firms that have occupational schemes. Cover is provided for the vast majority of employees either through occupational schemes or through the discretion of the employer. The hon. Gentleman is wrong.

The Government should be commended for introducing the Bill. Any change usually results in those who think that they might be losers making loud protests, whereas in general the gainers are either unaware that they are gainers or they tend to remain silent. There have been protests from the small business lobby, half a protest from the big business lobby—on whose behalf my hon. Friend the Member for Beverley (Mr. Cran) spoke—and the disability lobby has expressed concern. They are confused about the impact of the Bill. They should recognise that, within the whole balance of priorities, there are benefits.

Hon. Members on both sides of the House share a genuine concern for the disabled and for those in society who cannot look after themselves; but I am concerned that some people who are not ill take advantage of the £1,000 million a year statutory sick pay. I refer Opposition Members to the Audit Commission's report. The hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) said that the report did not refer to the generality of authorities, only to the London authorities. It is clear that he did not read the report. The very first exhibit refers to all districts. It shows that sickness levels in all local authority direct labour organisations are above the CBI's average national figure. The averages for the shire districts, the metropolitan districts and the London boroughs are all above the national average.

Ms. Short: The hon. Gentleman is making a serious and dangerous point. We all agree that it is wrong when people pretend to be sick, and there should be a tightening of the rules wherever that is happening. However, if the hon. Gentleman is using that to justify cutting the sick pay of low-paid workers who are genuinely sick, that is inexcusable.

Mr. Thurnham: I share the hon. Lady's concern, but it is clear from the report that there are cases of non-genuine sickness. It gives considerable detail of the causes of the problem, including institutionalised sickness that is not genuine sickness. It suggests that there is a lack of proper management. The Bill is good because it brings more responsibility to bear on individual employers, so that if they have higher than average levels of sickness, they have greater reason to question why. I recommend the report, which is very good, to the hon. Lady. It lists many factors that can lead to higher than average sickness rates. It is not simply because the employees are not healthy; it is because the management systems are not adequate.

Mr. Rowe: Somewhat to my embarrassment, I must confess that I have not read the report. I was a civil servant many years ago, and it was commonplace to hear people say, "I have sick leave due to me." Perhaps that is what the report is highlighting.

Mr. Thurnham: My hon. Friend has put his finger on an important point.

Paragraph 55 of the report states that one of the authorities had 12 days uncertificated sickness absence built into its computer printouts as free days. If someone does not take all of those days, no doubt he is asked why. It is an example of where the greater responsibility that is built into the Bill will bring home to all those employed in an organisation the real causes of sickness levels. Is it because employees are generally unhealthy——

Mr. Martlew: When the Government introduced statutory sick pay, they also introduced self-certification. Is the hon. Gentleman admitting that that legislation has been a flop and has increased the number of days lost through sickness?

Mr. Thurnham: I understand that largely the legislation is working very well. Employees can self-certificate for periods up to six days. I suspect that the legislation is working differently in private industry from in the public sector. I refer the hon. Gentleman to the report. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, the Opposition and all sides of industry agree that the legislation has worked well since it was introduced, although I do not think that it is working that well in areas of the public sector.

I recommend that the hon. Gentleman reads the report, which lists ways to study the matter, sets target levels for acceptable degress of sickness, and sets trigger levels that would automatically instigate management investigation. It gives a list of key success factors that will enable authorities to study practices in their organisations. For the most part, local authorities have a good reputation as caring employers, and I am sure that they would not wish to lose that. However, there is evidence that in London and in a number of other authorities—such as my authority of Bolton—sickness is above the average rate for industry. That suggests that not all the reported absences can be due to genuine incapacity.

The report states that it is clear that much can be done to reduce the current high levels of sickness absence without introducing burdensome terms and conditions. Many of the authorities reviewed in the report have already implemented recommendations and are now benefiting from the improvements. That demonstrates how a more responsible attitude to sickness can be to the benefit of everyone in industry, and especially to those who are most deserving of the help that we can give them. I commend the Bill to the House.

7.47 pm

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): It is ironic that the last Bill to come before the House for its Second Reading under a woman Prime Minister should be one that will have such a bad effect on women. As my hon. Friend the Member for

[Mrs. Alice Mahon]

Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) said, it is a squalid memorial to Thatcher's reign. She might be a woman, but she is certainly no sister.

It is legitimate to ask the three contenders for the Tory crown who are now grubbing about in the Lobbies what they think about the Bill and what they will say in 12 months' time if it has the bad effects that we expect. They have all stated their credentials for the job that they all want. They have all claimed a common touch—the class warrior, the potato planter and the weightlifter. I should be interested to know whether, in a few years' time, the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) will deny thrice before the cock crows that he had supported the Bill. I shall be interested to know what Lobby he votes in tonight.

The Secretary of State appeared reluctant to accept the reality that low-paid workers in non-unionised workplaces often have difficulty in obtaining statutory sick pay, and there is plenty of evidence of that. The Low Pay Unit has clearly stated the effect of the Bill on women. Female employees having earnings between £125 and £175, and part-time workers—many of whom are excluded from occupational sick pay schemes—will be badly hit by the Bill's provisions.

It is no use the Secretary of State making spurious arguments to the effect that small businesses do not really mean what they say. There is plenty of evidence of opposition to the Bill, if only the Government will listen. The National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux undertook a survey of employers who do not provide statutory sick pay, but obviously the Government do not want to hear that evidence.

There can be dire consequences for employees who are dismissed because of sickness. They not only risk immediate hardship, but will lose entitlement to unemployment benefits for six months if they cannot prove unfair dismissal if they qualify under the two-year rule. The Government had access to NACAB's reports on SSP, low pay and poor working conditions, but have ignored them.

One citizens advice bureau in Hertfordshire reported seven cases in one month of employers refusing to pay SSP to eligible workers. There is a great deal of evidence that employers cheat on that benefit.

The National Federation of Self Employed and Small Businesses is strongly opposed to the Bill, and rightly accuses the Government of reneging on their earlier promises. The Secretary of State let the cat out of the bag tonight when he was questioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher), and refused to reveal the Government's intentions in respect of the future level of reimbursement to employers. The right hon. Gentleman had an opportunity to tell the House what he is about, but refused to take it.

My hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) is right when he says that the Government's long-term intention is to privatise the scheme and to rid themselves of what they see as a burden, as they go about breaking up the welfare state. The hon. Member for Beverley (Mr. Cran) asked the Secretary of State for a nod and a wink, but he will be bitterly disappointed. We have heard all that we are to hear tonight.

Many other organisations oppose the Bill being taken in the Lobby tonight are any in shall see another Prime Minister in the Thatch the Dispatch Box next week. The Goverm refuse to listen and are totally inflexible, Opposition's arguments may be. Many ba rights have been lost under the present Gover include maternity benefits, the right to against unfair dismissal, wage protection people, benefits for short-time working, and safety protection in many areas.

In my own constituency, workers at the Co were left without protection when it went into Loyal, long-service workers who were entitled notice were unable to claim until that peri expired. If they are lucky enough to find work that—after a month, say—they receive only redundancy pay, and none of the extra se negotiated by their union. The receiver has a the company's shareholders, and they consideration. That unfortunate group of wo even get their holiday pay. It is scandalous thing should happen to decent people.

The hon. Member for Bolton, North Thurnham) referred to low pay. Last week, Halifax jobcentre to see what work was on o textile workers. There were only four advertised, and they were all in other area Calderdale. One of the vacancies was for twister machine operator, at £99·79 for a 4 Another was for a security guard dog handl £1·50 to £2 per hour. The third job was controller in a meat processing factory, at a per hour. That is what my right hon. and mean by low pay.

A number of workers made redundant by already been to see me. One 56-year-old despair because it is unlikely that he will fin —at least with a company like Coloroll. tragedy has nothing to do with the Bill, bu what is happening in the real world and i arguments about low pay. Three hund workers in my constituency face a very blea

John Ashcroft, the high-flying managin Coloroll, who wreaked such havoc on the the community of Sowerby Bridge, was p rooftops by the Prime Minister as the entrep year. He will have a good Christmas, bec himself £1·2 million in dividends the year be collapsed.

Other Community countries have protecti France helps workers caught in dreadful situ that at Coloroll.

The Bill is another attack on low-paid emp of whom do dirty, hazardous and boring w can never save for the day when they may fa an accident. I refer to the people at the botto about whom Conservative Members do no but who will be penalised still further u legislation. It is estimated that 3 million low will lose out under the Bill. It has been employers' national insurance contributions which will provide some compensation employers will not make that connection. Secretary of State claims, the changes wil against employers whose workers fall sick.

My hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West quoted the clear advice of the Spastics Society that the Bill will discourage employers from taking on people who are disabled or have poor health records. The Government know that that is true. We saw a dreadful performance by the Secretary of State: he was so embarrassed by what he had to tell the House that he went on for about an hour and a quarter, but he could not cover up the fact that the disabled will be worse off.

The Bill is about saving the Government money—getting rid of the existing scheme and having it privatised. It is all part of the Government's attack on the low-paid. It is like a creeping, deadly slime that is suffocating the basic rights of working people. I hope that Conservative Members will feel a twinge of conscience, and will vote against this shabby, nasty little Bill.

7.58 pm

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): The hon. Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon), who spoke with great feeling, said that the Bill is shabby, and claimed that it is another attempt to cut Government expenditure in an area of social welfare provision. She is wrong. This legislation must be seen as part and parcel of the Government's growing commitment to social welfare provision. One cannot consider it in isolation, or without taking into account the significant financial improvements announced for next year, in respect of pensions, residential care and nursing home allowances, family benefits—and in particular, as was mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Dudley, West (Dr. Blackburn), benefits for the disabled.

That is a major step forward in the provision of help where it is required, and we all warmly welcome that. It is targeted help. The Government appreciate that that is the only way to put increased financial resources into areas where there are known problems, so that we can tackle them more easily.

Ms. Short *rose*——

Mr. King: I have only just started, and I hope that I have not said anything with which any hon. Member would disagree.

Ms. Short: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. He is absolutely right that in the uprating statement, when the Government gave a little increase for the first-born child because they were embarrassed about the failure to increase child benefit, something for people in residential homes because elderly, frail people were being evicted and something for poor pensioners—all of which is welcome—the Treasury said that the Department could not have any more money, so something else had to be ripped out of the social security budget. This is it—the low-paid sick are paying for those improvements. Does he agree with that?

Mr. King: No, I do not agree with that. It is a Government Department's task to deal with the Treasury—to wheel and deal within the financial constraints placed upon it—to get the best settlement that it possibly can, and establish a set of priorities as to where that money should be spent.

To my mind, the Bill is a perfectly acceptable piece of legislation, but I make one strong suggestion, which has already been mentioned this evening. The Bill sets out a requirement that national insurance contributions will b reduced from 100 per cent. to 80 per cent., and as consequence the reimbursement rate can in future b reduced or increased, by order. I am a little unhappy abou that, but I can accept the principle contained in the Bill t provide assistance for employers.

If any adjustments are necessary, I hope that my righ hon. Friend will consider further assistance for employer to ensure that no great net disadvantage is passed on t them.

If one considers the Bill's financial implications, th reduced amount given to employers is worth about £25 million and is weighted in favour of those employer whose employees are paid less. That is important because by and large, small businesses pay less than large ones Therefore, my right hon. Friend has done what he can t help smaller businesses.

The main problem which we face has not bee mentioned in the debate—how to resolve the constan difficulty of funding statutory sick pay for about 6 millio people. In 1989-90, that amounted to £955 million. On wonders whether such an enormous sum of money—it i growing every year—must necessarily be paid by society t fund the growing incidence of sickness.

There is little incentive for us to stay healthy in thi country. The statutory requirements of the health and safety at work legislation are fulfilled by businesses well but to what extent do companies provide for the health o their work force? Japanese businesses and many continental companies have active health programmes fo their employees which reduce the cost of absenteeism and sickness. As a nation, we have been accused of being unhealthy.

Mr. Martlew: I think that the hon. Gentleman will find that those Japanese companies which have occupational health schemes also have the best sick pay policies. The companies with the worst sick pay policies make no provision for occupational health.

Mr. King: To some extent, I do not disagree with the hon. Gentleman. The probable reason why the Japanese can have the best sick pay benefits available is that they are much healthier as a result of the active health programmes that employees enjoy.

Some British companies are beginning to consider following the Japanese idea of physical jerks first thing in the morning. There is no doubt that that seems to have ensured better attendance by workers of Japanese manufacturing companies. Perhaps we should consider that idea in more detail.

As a result of passing on a little more of the commitment to provide funding for statutory sick pay, perhaps companies in this country will pay more attention to the welfare of the work force, at very little cost. It is not a question of having to invest vast sums of money.

The average person in this country has often been accused of having a poor diet, eating the wrong things, drinking too much, smoking and having a poor life style. All that is probably to some extent true and many of us are guilty. The trend cannot be easily reversed. Local authorities have launched a programme to acquaint everyone with the risks of being a lounge lizard, of not doing enough exercise, and of eating the wrong things—they can only lead to heart problems and to stress. Many

[Mr. King]

people lack exercise. Their only sport may be darts or snooker, which is more evidence that we have an unphysical outlook towards recreation and sport.

There is a way forward, if we try to link the sick pay which companies have to provide and their increasingly important role in improving the health of their work force. It should not just be a question of people turning up at work at 7.30 am, starting work and going home in the evening. Companies pay a great deal of attention to their machinery and to the equipment which provides work, but not much to the most vital of production—the employees themselves. I hope that closer attention to the health and welfare of their employees will be a consequence of this legislation. That can be tackled easily.

How many offices have too much heating and are too hot? Some can be found within the Palace of Westminster. Poor ventilation and overheated premises lead to employees becoming unhealthy—they get colds, sickness and flu. Admittedly, it would take a great deal of money to put that right in the Palace, but in many factories, if air conditioning, proper ventilation and heating were introduced, the result would be a saving in carbon dioxide emissions.

Poor lighting is another problem which needs to be considered. Not only too little light, but too much can cause sickness and absenteeism from the work place, with increased costs to the community and the company.

Other, more high-tech, problems are being encountered by visual display unit operators and computer programmers who stare at screens all day long, and more research is being carried out in that area. Such employees are encountering problems with headaches. Companies shrug their shoulders and put it down as a fact of life, because someone else will pick up the bill when employees are off sick. If we pass on a little more of the burden to employers, perhaps they will consider working conditions more carefully. Although working conditions might pass a health inspection, as technology and techniques move on they probably need to be reconsidered.

Mrs. Mahon: Has the hon. Gentleman considered the effect of Government policies and privatisation? For example, domestic workers at the health authority for which I work were privatised. The work force was cut by half but was expected to achieve impossible performance targets. Those people, who were mainly women, suffered from stress, anxiety and sheer tiredness in trying to achieve the impossible targets, and within 12 months there had been a 100 per cent. turnover in staff. Will he consider such problems in speaking on what employers can do for employees?

Mr. King: The hon. Lady makes an interesting point. I would not try to defend any get-rich-quick organisation that sought to undercut an established operation by using labour in the way that the hon. Lady mentioned. There is no doubt that many excesses and problems have resulted from that splurge of privatisation. No management or company director can operate successfully in that way. There is nothing worse than a high turnover of staff or than signing a contract with a health authority or school only to discover that no one shows up because they are not well or because they have walked out. The private sector can operate only if its employees are prepared to work with it. Businesses will not last long unless t between management and the work f conditions are right to ensure continuit

Employees of the National Freight C other business benefited consider Government's privatisation policy. W improvement in working standard privatisation has produced.

Mr. Martin Redmond (Don Valley): hon. Gentleman. He suggested that o employees are capable of continuous w sector employees give total commitment and many, such as nurses, are committe elderly. I wish that he would withdraw sector employees do not give full comm

Mr. King: If I said that, and I am qu not, the hon. Gentleman misunderstoo cast a slur on any national health serv anyone else. I do not doubt that they commitment to their jobs. I would no that a public sector employee does not w I hope that the hon. Gentleman will companies are capable of ensuring loyalty and efficiency than are some p sector because the profit motive driv forward. Nothing better illustrates t repairs, which are carried out in Birm labour oganisations and the private sec organisations work less effectively and the private sector.

Mr. Battle: On a point of order, Mr Probably more than most hon. Membe like to debate housing policy, which sufficiently. Is it in order for the hon. housing in a debate on the Statutory S

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean debates lend themselves to fairly wide s yet heard anything out of order, b Member for Birmingham, Northfield (M that point I should begin to become w

Mr. King: I hear what you say, Mr. have clearly touched a sensitive nerv explanation of the differences between private sector organisations. I accept organisations can be, and are, as e organisations, but the private sector, operate efficiently, should not be brand inconsiderate of its work force.

The Bill should result in heal Employers will want to ensure that the and opportunities for their employees t and to fulfil the duties for which they

By ensuring that employees are c work, we could eliminate one of th consequences of manufacturing and —backache and back trouble. That is facing us and is the primary cause of ab done to address the causes of sickne make employers redouble their effo workplace more attractive and h employees. To that extent, it is a ste should welcome.

8.17 pm

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): I am not surprised by the speeches of Conservative Members. The Bill is bent and it has been produced by a bent Government. *[Laughter.]* That is what it amounts to. The hon. Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King) can laugh. I listened to what he had to say and I am clear in my mind that I agree with one comment that he made on the workplace: it should be healthy for employees, but he knows as well as me that in the past 11 years the Opposition have been trying to convince the Government that the workplace is not right. One of the reasons for that is the cuts—I am not talking about money, but it relates to money—in Her Majesty's inspectorate, which has been reduced and reduced. How can inspectors do their job in the workplace when those cuts have been made?

I came from the mining industry and know only too well that there were not enough inspectors on the job. Full-time trade union officials, without political interference, told us quite clearly that we must make the Government do something about the mines inspectorate. What did the Government do? They reduced the number of inspectors. We kept banging the Dispatch Box, but the Minister still did not take any notice. The hon. Member for Northfield mentioned backache. That is the worst thing in the mining industry, and it is the same in the factories. If inspectors do not get round to factories, that suffering goes on.

People are sick and are getting injured because in many cases the employer could not care less; as long as he is getting his production and his profit, he does not care about the workers. The hon. Member for Northfield can grin—he sits on the management side. Conservative Members sit there—there are not many here at the moment—and they are all connected to Lloyd's. *[Laughter.]* Oh, yes, I hit the nail right on the head there. A number of hon. Members have connections with insurance companies when it comes to sick pay, so there is a rake-off for them.

Members of Parliament do not have to bother about sick pay. It is nice and cushy to sit on these green Benches and talk about what workers should have.

Mr. Quentin Davies *rose*——

Mr. Haynes: Hey-up, here comes Stamford and Spalding again; he is always at it, but I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Davies: I apologise for intruding during the hon. Gentleman's characteristic performance, but does he agree with me in principle that to weight the national insurance system towards the lower-paid so that they derive the greatest benefit from it is a laudable aim? Does he welcome my right hon. Friend's proposal fully to index the lower rate of statutory sick pay, thereby favouring the lower-paid as against other groups of workers?

Mr. Haynes: I do not understand this fellow. When we were considering a Bill in Committee, one day I saw him downstairs in the cafeteria where he was studying share prices to see how much money he had made. He talks about sick pay and the lower-paid, but how does he know what we are talking about when it comes to sick pay and low-paid workers? He and many other Conservative Members have been living off the backs of the low- is high time we got to power and turned things ro other way.

I am pleased that the Minister for Social Secu Disabled People is still here. He was sitting on t Benches just now, but he is down there again. That because he wants to hear what I have to say. He c be ashamed of himself; he is supposed to repre disabled. I see that he nods in agreement. He kno there is a measure on the statute book that sta businesses should employ 3·5 per cent. of disabled in their work force. He has never done his job. Ma do not employ any disabled people, never mind cent. The Bill will lead to businesses taking on fe fewer disabled people. They will be looked on as a Small businesses have something to shout about, a doing that on their behalf.

Mr. Redmond: The Bill will undoubtedly employers reconsider the number of disabled peo employ. The Minister could announce that he int take steps against those employers who do not ful quota. My hon. Friend ought to be aware that t Board does not employ its full quota. Before M look at what happens outside this place, they o consider the number of disabled people who are em here and find out whether we are meeting the quo

Mr. Haynes: We do not. Months ago, I t question about the number of disabled people w employed in this building. The Government a meeting the quota. The Minister for Social Secur Disabled People ought to be ashamed of himself; h doing his flaming job. It is time that he came over side, or did not even come back to this place. He o let someone else get on with the job of looking a disabled.

We have got this leadership election [HON. M "We have."] There are three of them.

Mr. Quentin Davies: The hon. Gentleman n leader.

Ms. Short: The hon. Member for Stamfor Spalding (Mr. Quentin Davies) is trying to cover h embarrassment.

Mr. Haynes: I will tell the hon. Gentle *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. It is very unfair to intimidate the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Haynes: That one there does not intimida With a voice like that, how could he work in a pi

Mr. Davies: The hon. Gentleman may have de from the sound of my voice, that I am suffering bronchitis, but he may have noticed that I am not cl statutory sick pay.

Mr. Haynes: The hon. Gentleman knows damn that he does not have to. I said just now that he gets his salary, even if he is off work, so it ma difference. He is as thick as a pudding, and a Chr pudding at that. Why on earth does he not listen t is said?

Three Conservative Members are up for the lead All three of them, over a period, sat round the C table with the lady at No. 10 and agreed all the p

[Mr. Haynes]

What do we hear now? They want to change them all. How dishonest can that be? It is hypocritical. However, they are trying to cadge votes from their colleagues because they want to be leader of the Conservative party, with a view to becoming Prime Minister. The people outside have already seen through that one. Never mind the opinion polls; they can be forgotten.

The hon. Member for Northfield will go. He will be able to return to one of the jobs that he has already got besides being a Member of Parliament. A whole clique of them sitting over there know what they will do when they lose their seats at the next election. They have covered their backs. The hon. Member for Northfield is one of them. So is the hon. Member for Stamford and Spalding (Mr. Davies).

A number of small business men in my constituency are suffering. They have had to lay people off. Many of them have gone out of business. They are a burden on the state; they have lost everything because of this Government's policies. Here comes another burden that they do not like. It is no use hon. Members such as the hon. Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) saying that businesses agree and feel that they should be making their contribution. Oh, yes, they will be making their contribution all right by going downhill. What he said was a load of rubbish. Those firms will go out of business if the Government carry on in this way.

The Government have done many other things that have not helped businesses. That is why the nation is in such a mess. We want the Minister of State to say tonight that he intends to withdraw the Bill. It is a complete waste of time. It will also be a complete waste of time to have the Committee stage on the Floor of the House. Let us get on with something that is really important—for example, the leadership campaign for the next Prime Minister. While I am at it, let me point out that we have a first-class leader and I am right behind him. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Stamford and Spalding really has got a cough; hark at him. He is not at all well. I do not know what he has been doing.

Mr. Martlew: He has been out shooting.

Mr. Haynes: He has been out shooting, has he? It is no wonder, in this weather, that he has bronchitis.

We do not support the Bill. We hope sincerely that it will be withdrawn. I agree completely with what was said by my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle). Since 1979, the Government have been adamant that they will destroy the welfare state. This is another step towards that destruction. The sooner we have the next election, to turn things around and put my party on the other side of the Chamber so that we can run the country in the interests of all the people in the nation, the better off we shall all be.

8.29 pm

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): I anticipate the next election with no anxiety about its outcome, but with some sorrow, because I know that the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) does not intend to stand. I think that we shall all miss his robust form of pantomime. He expresses, in a way that none of his colleagues can match, the heart of the Labour party's philosophy—the view that at no time and in no manner should a party re-examine the policies that it has devised: indeed, he claimed that it was hypocritical to do so.

Mr. Redmond: That is simply not true. Opposition Members are constantly reviewing policies, on the ground that what is good enough for today may well not be good enough for tomorrow. We are always looking at the problems facing the country. Regrettably, Conservative Members are not doing the same: we see no change of policy until a leadership election, when each candidate names the policies that he would like to alter.

Perhaps the hon. Gentleman could approach the three leadership candidates and ask them to consider whether the Bill is worth passing, in view of the tremendous damage that it will do to industry. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will agree that the main problem with social security policies is the fact that, since 1979, they have been continually altered.

Mr. Rowe: I shall certainly include that in the list of questions that I shall be asking the three candidates. I should, however, be interested to know how many Opposition Members agree with the hon. Member for Ashfield—who clearly considers it positively hypocritical for Cabinet Ministers, and former Cabinet Ministers, to reconsider policies—and how many agree with the hon. Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond). The hon. Member for Don Valley was, of course, right to remind us that Labour's views on nuclear disarmament, membership of Europe and, indeed, the sale of council houses have undergone a number of changes—which we welcome, as they have now adopted in substantial measure the policies that we have consistently advocated.

Ms. Short: Although the Labour view on council house sales has been divided in that some Labour councils have always sold them, there is complete agreement that it is sinful to sell them and not replace them, which is what has been done under the present Administration. We favour council house sales to tenants who want them, but they should always be replaced to avoid the increasing homelessness that we have seen in Birmingham as a result of the Government's refusal to allow councils to build.

Mr. Rowe: There is considerable merit in a policy of increasing the number of houses available to those on low incomes. I welcome the moves to strengthen the housing associations; I do not, however, believe that many councils' record of administration, maintenance and organisation of housing stock is nearly good enough for us to welcome the prospect of their returning to large-scale building and management.

I am sorry to see that the hon. Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) has left the Chamber. I listened to her speech with interest, and found it extraordinary that one of her arguments against the Bill should be the fact that employers constantly cheat on legislation. In my view, there is something inherent in the system of 100 per cent. reimbursement that will encourage malevolent and fraudulent employers to cheat: with or without the connivance of the work force, it will be perfectly possible for them to claim a state payment amounting to 100 per cent. of what has been claimed from them.

Small businesses genuinely fear that another burden will be placed on them, at a time when they are not very well placed to deal with such burdens. I hope that my right

hon. Friend will consider carefully before any decision is made to change the 80 per cent. arrangement. Ultimately, however, I think that the whole national insurance scheme should be re-examined. It has never—from the day of its introduction—worked as Beveridge intended: it has never been properly funded, and has therefore always been subject to the vicissitudes of the national economy. Whenever a Government of any colour have found themselves in any kind of difficulty, they have used the national insurance system as a regulator for the economy generally, and the nation as a whole has had a pretty bad deal as a result. Any private insurance scheme that was run in such a way would be regarded by those who paid into it as a pretty duff show. It is high time that the way in which we meet people's needs was radically overhauled.

As many of my hon. Friends know, I have long advocated the introduction of a national minimum income, although I also consider that the national minimum wage is either enormously destructive of jobs or ineffective. We already have the rudiments of such a system: with the exception of married people who do not work but whose spouses do, not a single group does not receive what could be described as the beginnings of a national minimum income.

Mr. Martlew: The hon. Gentleman appears to be saying that employers can pay very low wages and the state can top them up. I do not think that the state should get into the habit of subsidising poor employers; that militates against the employers who pay a reasonable rate.

Mr. Rowe: One of the difficulties of a national minimum income scheme is exactly that. I believe that we need a system whereby people's incomes cannot fall below a certain level, and any amount that employers contribute above that minimum should not necessarily be accompanied by a 100 per cent. reduction: they should not lose £1 every time they add £1. The country has got itself into a real mess. This is not a party political or partisan point. Any Government must face the fact that it is now almost impossible to organise the paying out of benefits and the meeting of specific needs without a large group of people losing out every time the boundaries are changed.

Mr. Redmond: I thank the hon. Gentleman for clearing up the confusion on that point.

Regrettably, the Government have pursued a policy that has tended to depress minimum rates of pay. One of the problems is that sickness benefit has also been eroded. I understood sick pay to be a safety net to stop people from falling into poverty, but unfortunately that does not appear to be the case. I agree that there should be a national minimum wage and sick pay to match it. Pundits, academics and experts are all agreed on that.

Given the advice from all sides that a minimum rate should be set other than what the Government decree, does the hon. Gentleman agree that there is a vast difference between what the Government state and what people outside state? As the Government are not interested in a safety net for sick pay or in a minimum rate of pay, could the hon. Gentleman convince his colleagues that a safety net is desperately needed to eliminate poverty at the sharp end where people feel it?

Mr. Rowe: The hon. Gentleman misunderstands my point. A national minimum wage would destroy jobs because many individuals and businesses would be unable or unwilling to pay that wage. Either it would be enforced by inspectors, in which case many jobs would go, or, as in many mainland European countries, it would simply be ignored.

I am interested in the definition of a national minimum income.

Ms. Short: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Rowe: If the hon. Lady will forgive me, no.

There should be a sum below which no one, whether in or out of work, should be expected to operate. Clearly, if a person were in work, any contribution that the state had to make would reduce on a taper.

Mr. Redmond: I apologise to the hon. Gentleman. I thought that he was advocating a national minimum wage. If he is saying that there should not be a national minimum wage but that there should be statutory sick pay, which stops people falling to a desperate level of poverty, he is arguing that the state should continue to subsidise firms that pay horrendously low wages. Taxpayers' money should not be used to subsidise bad employers.

Mr. Rowe: I am a great believer in a high-wage, high-skill economy. Good and successful companies have good working conditions, pay good wages, have good redundancy arrangements and so on. That is the way forward. Do not let anybody be under any misunderstanding about that. A national minimum income would remove substantially the danger of subsidising low wages because people would not be forced into taking low wages. I do not want to go too far from the main thrust of the Bill.

The national insurance system does not operate anything like as smoothly as it should. There may well be a great deal of advantage in having a system that is fully funded. The Government may be able to contribute to that funding for those who cannot make their contribution from their low wage. We have a pay-as-you-go system, which is completely sensitive to the Government's handling of the economy and it does not work well. I am anxious to have a contributory system, which would be fully funded. It would probably be operated by a private organisation, although it would not worry me unduly if it were operated by a national organisation that was wholly separate, fenced round and properly audited.

I accept that there is the difficulty of exclusions. There are those whose state of disability or health record is such that a private insurance company will not accept them easily. The Government have a responsibility to help those people make the necessary additional premium contributions that allow them to remain beneficiaries of the insurance system. Hon. Members on both sides have pointed to the real danger that in the short term the Bill may make it harder for disabled people to be employed because many employers do not understand that the loyalty of disabled people frequently outweighs the illness quota that they must have over and above the average. The way to handle that is not to have a national statutory sick pay scheme such as we have now, but for disabled people to be able to lay claim to whatever additional resource they need to make it possible for an employer to take them on. There may be considerable advantages in exploring that line.

I am prepared to accept the measure at its 80 per cent. level now, but before we go much further, we need to incorporate the statutory sick pay arrangements in a much

[Mr. Rowe]

wider review of the way in which we meet national insurance-type needs. The present national insurance scheme has never worked as Beveridge intended. It has never been properly funded. We need a radical review. I am much more willing to talk to the three candidates for the Conservative party leadership about that than about the detail of the Bill.

8.47 pm

Mr. Eric Martlew (Carlisle): I was impressed by the flamboyance of my hon. Friend the Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) in telling the Minister to come to the Dispatch Box and withdraw the Bill. I can suggest a replacement. Indeed, today I wrote to the Prime Minister on the matter. I addressed it, "To Whom it May Concern" and put a second-class stamp on the envelope. My suggestion is that the Government should replace this Bill quickly with a Bill to eradicate the poll tax. Tory Members are as opposed to the poll tax as we are. If the Government put such a Bill before the House, I am sure that the Labour party would accept it, it would pass through both Houses quickly and be on the statute book just after Christmas. In that way this year's poll tax bills would be the last and we would not fight a fraudulent election on whether the legislation should be amended. As that could be classified as a digression, I shall now turn to the Bill.

The Government introduced statutory sick pay in 1981. I was one of the unfortunate people who had to implement it in industry and it was not a popular measure. It is bureaucratic. The Government's idea was to redeploy 5,000 civil servants. They redeployed 5,000, and probably had to employ a further 2,000 in the private sector to calculate the system of statutory sick pay. There was no saving in manpower. It is just a way of shifting expenditure from the Exchequer to the private sector. That is what the Bill will do. It will not save money; it will merely place the burden on the private sector. Given high interest rates and the number of bankruptcies that we face, it seems ridiculous to place such extra burdens on industry. We should reduce those burdens, principally by reducing interest rates.

The introduction of SSP was partly the result of self-certification which, in turn, was brought about by pressure from the British Medical Association—when it was still speaking to the Government. The doctors said, "It is not our job merely to provide medical certificates." Human nature being what it is, the number of days lost through sickness was bound to increase. The hon. Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) gave us a disgraceful example which emphasised the point: the number of days lost through sickness has increased, but we are refusing to take responsibility for it.

Self-certification did three things. First, it delayed the moment at which a sick person went to the doctor. In some cases, that delayed the person's recovery. On that point, we must remember the pernicious tax that the Government have levied on sick people in the form of prescription charges. Many low-paid workers cannot afford to pay prescription charges and that, too, delays their recovery.

Secondly, self-certification destroyed confidentiality between doctor and patient——

Mr. Quentin Davies: Will the hon. Gentleman concede that the previous certification procedures sometimes involved wasting a great deal of the GP's valuable time? Doctors could have been treating patients who needed treatment instead of filling in forms for people in respects of whose ailments no medical attention was necessary.

Mr. Martlew: There is no evidence to suggest that we are now a healthier society. The general practitioners argued that, following self-certification, they would be able to spend more time with sick people and so reduce the amount of sickness. The reverse has proved to be the case, although the result probably has more to do with the Government's economic and social policies than with the medical care offered by general practitioners.

Self-certification also destroyed confidentiality. A doctor who did not want to disclose to an employer the ailment from which a person was suffering would merely write on the certificate "debility", and that was good enough for both management and the state. That is no longer the case. The employee has to say what he is suffering from. The word "debility" will not be accepted by management and it will certainly not be accepted by the Department. It would be very difficult for someone suffering from AIDS to say so on his self-certification form, but that is what the rules require; there is no argument about that.

Thirdly, self-certification has enabled people to pretend that they are ill, and there is no doubt that that sometimes happens.

Mr. Redmond: Does my hon. Friend agree that the trouble with self-certification is that someone may diagnose himself wrongly? The beauty of going to a doctor and explaining one's symptoms is that the doctor may be able to detect a severe disabling illness in its early stages. If the person is suffering from nothing more than a hangover, the doctor can say, "I'm sorry: you ain't getting a note." That means that the person will think twice before trying to mislead his employer again. I agree with my hon. Friend that if someone goes to a doctor and explains his problem, his life may be saved.

Mr. Martlew: I could not agree more. Moreover, self-certification may put public health at risk. Under the old system, someone suffering from food poisoning who worked in a food factory could have his problem identified immediately. The doctor would tell the environmental health officers and the person would be excluded from work. That no longer happens and, as we know, there has been a threefold increase in food poisoning since self-certification and the statutory sick pay scheme came into effect.

As I was saying, there is the odd person who will not play the game—who will skive. In my experience, the entrepreneurial people tended to come back with a sun tan because six days' leave plus a weekend had enabled them to spend a week in Spain. They were a small minority, but it happened nevertheless. We have had a perfect example this week. People who are masquerading as Ministers have in fact been running an election campaign. They are not working. I understand that the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, who was here a moment ago, is the campaign manager for one of the contestants in the leadership election. I bet he has not done much work today. If we had self-certification in the House, the right hon. Gentleman would probably have certified himself sick so that he could get on with his other job.

Mr. Rowe: Some of the hon. Gentleman's post hoc ergo propter hoc arguments are a little loose. It seems to me likely that food poisoning has increased because of the widespread use of microwave ovens rather than because of self-certification. The hon. Gentleman's argument is somewhat dangerous.

Mr. Martlew: I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman should say that, as many people's jobs depend on the manufacture of microwave ovens and such a slur could affect them badly. I am a member of the Select Committee on Agriculture, which is looking into the problem of microwave ovens. We have yet to be given any evidence to suggest that that is a major cause of food poisoning.

Mr. Rowe: I did not suggest that microwave ovens were the cause of food poisoning but, rather, that food poisoning is caused by people who do not understand how to use microwave ovens.

Mr. Martlew: I am surprised that Conservative Members should not have learnt the lessons of imprecision. One Minister lost her job because she implied that there was something wrong with eggs. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will not lose any influence that he may have by suggesting that there is something wrong with microwave ovens.

Statutory sick pay was a very bureaucratic system, which transferred the costs to industry. I fear that we shall have a problem with disabled people. At present, we do not meet our quota, although I am not sure that a quota system is the right way to get disabled people into employment. Many companies employ people who are disabled but who are not registered as such because there is no need for them to register. I am saying not that the Government have anything other than a diabolical record on the recruitment and employment of disabled people but that the Bill will encourage employers to sack people who are sick. An employer who does so will make a saving. No civilised Government should create such an incentive, yet that is exactly what the Bill does. It will also transfer the cost to the state.

Mr. Quentin Davies: Will the hon. Gentleman reconsider that allegation? No tribunal would accept a genuine illness as a valid ground for dismissal. To sack someone on that basis would result in the employer having to pay redundancy or other compensation charges far greater than any notional saving under the SSP arrangements contained in the Bill.

Mr. Martlew: The hon. Gentleman should be able to square his conscience about this, but if he votes in favour of the Bill tonight, he will not be able to do that. Many people do not have the right to go to a tribunal. If someone has been employed for less than two years or is working a reduced number of hours, he or she will not have the right to go to a tribunal. Those people will qualify for SSP because they have worked long enough for an employer, but they might be dismissed before they have any real rights.

If someone has been working for an employer for 22 or 23 months and is about to qualify for protection under the industrial tribunal legislation, the employer has a double incentive to sack him. If that person is off sick and the employer does not get rid of him beforehand, the employer will be stuck with him. Unfortunately, some employers take that cold, calculating view. I believe that the Government are aware of it, and that is another reason why I shall be voting against the Bill.

9 pm

Mr. Richard Alexander (Newark): I am glad to take part in this debate because I was a member of the Standing Committee that considered the Social Security and Housing Benefits Bill in 1982. I was never a great enthusiast of the sick pay scheme. I felt that it imposed an extra duty on employers whose cup was already full. If they had very few staff and one went sick, they had to pay sickness benefit. Of course, they were reimbursed their payment and the national insurance contribution upon it, but I felt, and still feel to some extent, that that was a burden that I was not terribly happy to impose on the employer.

To my recollection—this is also the recollection of those who briefed us on this matter—assurances were given at that time that the scheme would not require employers actually to pay employees' sick pay. On that basis, those of us who believed that we were part of a crusading Goverment on behalf of smaller businesses and were intent on relieving them of the unnecessary burdens imposed on them by the previous Labour Government went along with the proposal. My right hon. Friend the Minister may correct me when he replies, but I believe, as do some people outside this place, that the Government are going back on commitments made and assurances given at that time. There is also widespread concern about it among the organisations which represent smaller businesses.

The National Farmers Union has given the figures. On present benefit figures, according to the NFU, the changes under this Bill will increase employers' costs for sickness payments by £26·50 a week for employees earning between £125 and just under £175 a week and by £19·90 a week for employees earning £175 or more a week. The Bill proposes that the reimbursement should be reduced from 100 per cent. to 80 per cent. and that the 7 per cent. of national insurance reinbursement should be removed.

I listened carefully to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I was impressed by his examples of how the effects would not be adverse for the vast majority of employers. On that basis, I will be supporting my right hon. Friend in the Lobby tonight. However, we have heard from outside bodies which lobby us that there will be adverse effects and that reductions in national insurance will not cover the extra amount that employers must find. That seems to me to mark a fundamental change in the whole ethos of the social security system.

Had I been a member of the Opposition this evening I should have attacked the Government and said that they were introducing this fundamental change suddenly and by the back door without many people realising what was going on; but since I am a supporter of the Government I will not say that. I suggest, however, that either we have a fully funded social security system or we do not. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) I think that a larger debate is due, in the House and in the country, on the place of social security in our social system, and on the national insurance scheme. Clearly they may be open to reform, but if we are to make major changes we need a more thorough debate on whether that reform is necessary.

[Mr. Richard Alexander]

My understanding of national insurance, which has been on the go for almost 50 years, is that it was designed to recognise that employers could not always afford to pay for employee's sickness. It should not now be for employers, particularly small ones, to have to insure against their employee's sickness. That is one of my basic worries about the Bill and I hope that my right hon. Friend will deal with it in the wind-up

Opposition Members have said that the proposal will create a problem for people with disabilities or illness, and I agree. I listened carefully to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, who said that he did not believe that the measure would have that effect on the disabled. He said that they had a fine employment record, that employers found that they were good employees and that there was no real discrimination against them. Perhaps the Bill will not mean that employers will be reluctant to take on disabled people, but there is a case for doubting whether people with a poor health record will be taken on. Employers, especially those at the margins, may look at a potential employee and say, "What is your health record? Unless you can give me some assurance that you are a fairly fit chap"—even for an unskilled job—"I will not take you on." I hope that these provisions will not have that effect, but I am worried.

All hon. Members know that smaller businesses are fighting for their lives and trading on the margins. We are all, I hope, trying to ensure that we do not impose on them greater burdens which will mean that they are pushed over the cliff. I am advised that there could be a burden of up to £11 a week for as many as 28 weeks. When I put that point to my right hon. Friend he assured me that the vast majority of cases of sickness lasted much less than 28 weeks. Nevertheless, this potential burden exists and I believe that I should articulate it on behalf of smaller businesses.

Smaller businesses are a loyal group—loyal to their employees and to the communities where they trade—and we need this section of industry. I look forward to hearing how the Minister proposes to deal with the anxieties that smaller businesses have expressed in correspondence with hon. Members and in a meeting that I had with my local federation of the self-employed. We have to sell these ideas to our constituents. As I said, some businesses are trading very much on the margins and we have a big selling job to do. The first task in that job is for my right hon. Friend the Minister to sell the ideas to us.

9.10 pm

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): The Bill has just three clauses, and clauses 2 and 3 are consequential on clause 1. However, the Minister took some time to introduce it.

I entered the House in 1978 and the hon. Member who replied to my maiden speech said that he was very happy about how things had gone. He said, "The hon. Gentleman has retained his seat, the Conservative has increased his vote, and the Liberal candidate did not lose his deposit." According to the Minister, the Bill is like that, because he said that it would not hurt the employee and does not make any difference to the employer. However, £157 million has to come from somewhere.

There is a Yorkshire saying, "You don't get owt for nowt." That means that we have to look at what is behind something that is seemingly being given away. If the Minister had said that his proposals were part of an overall scheme and would eventually lead to a new social security system, I could have accepted it. I would have welcomed the modernisation of a hotch-potch of welfare benefits in which we alter bits here and there. We are not being honest with ourselves unless we say that there is a plan to get rid of a hotch-potch of a system.

I believe the Minister when he says that there is nothing else in his drawer, because there is no reason why there should be anything. However, the Government's ultimate aim is to move responsibility for the state-funded welfare service to the backs of others. That happened with the poll tax, when the Government moved the burden of taxation from central to local government. The Bill is a continuation of the policy of moving the burden of the welfare state away from central Government and on to the employer: that is what it is all about.

The Secretary of State says that his proposals will not hurt the employer. He has not thought deeply enough about them, because their effect depends on the size of the employer, the number of his employees and his turnover. When we argue for increased wages, the Government tell us that employers cannot stand the expense, but the Bill creates additional expense for the employer. It will bring back to the Government over £150 million and, as I have said, that must come from somewhere. It will come from the employer.

The Government say that the money will be targeted elsewhere, but I am a little fed up with talk about targeting. When targeting takes place, it is always the lowest-paid who are hit. The Bill moves from the poor to strike at the poorer still. The Government are reallocating the money in the system rather than bringing in new money. The explanatory and financial memorandum to the Bill states:

"Clause 1 will produce savings in public expenditure of £181m in 1991-92, rising to £190m in 1992-93 and £197m in 1993-94."

It is simply taking money from one pocket and putting it into another. There is nothing magic about it. They are trying to create an illusion of being a caring Government looking after the low-paid workers. We have to ask ourselves who created these low-paid workers, the number of whom has increased since 1979. The Government are simply looking after a problem that they have created by creating further problems. That is what the Bill is about.

The Bill will affect the employer and the employee. I am sure that hon. Members will agree that a disabled person in employment gives more because he is disabled and appreciates having a job. I am concerned about people affected by recurring sickness. The Minister knows, because we have talked about this, that in mining areas there is a high incidence of bronchitis and emphysema. Chest diseases manifest themselves with the start of the cold weather. People who have left mining and gone into other employment will often have such illnesses.

An employer will wonder why he should take on such a person when he knows that it will cost him later on. I remember a manager saying to one of his employees who was ill, and who had said that he thought that the manager might have more sympathy, "I have, lad, but I can't run t' pit on sympathy." That is what the feeling of an employer will be when he has to decide whether to employ certain people.

As the recession bites and people have to be laid off, the first to go will be those who add to the running costs of a company, although they are the very ones who should be kept in work. The Bill will not only contribute to such problems, but is part of an overall scheme. During progress towards the completion of the scheme, many problems will be caused for sick people and, without any shadow of a doubt, for the small employer.

Let us not forget that the national insurance scheme was brought in on the understanding that there would be a full rebate and it would cost the employers nothing. It has always cost the employers something, because they have had to administer it, but 7 per cent. never even did that. By saying that they will pay only 80 per cent., the Government have reneged on their promise. There is a sting in the tail as well, in that the level of payment can be reduced through a statutory instrument, without a debate in the House. The Secretary of State has taken that power on himself, and it is no good saying that it will never be used. That was said about the rules and regulations on adopting a leader, but they are being used. The very fact that the power is there will lead a Secretary of State to use it when he thinks fit. That is wrong.

9.18 pm

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): The Secretary of State made it clear that it was impossible to discuss the Bill in isolation, without referring to the package of reforms on statutory sick pay that he announced in the uprating statement. Tory Members of Parliament have talked almost exclusively of their worries about the effects that it will have on employers. We share those concerns, but we are also concerned about the effect on employees.

I am sorry that the hon. Member for Stamford and Spalding (Mr. Davies) is not here, because when he suggested in an intervention that the package protects the low-paid, he was wrong. Some £100 million is being deliberately taken away from low-paid workers when they are sick. Some 3 million people earning between £125 and £175 a week will lose up to £9 a week. That is because the threshold has been moved and they have been deprived of the higher rate of sickness benefit.

The hon. Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) suggested that it was right that the higher-paid should help other groups in need—taking money from those who are sick to give it to, for example, elderly and frail people in residential homes. That is one poor group funding another poor group, which is the wrong way to go about it. If the hon. Gentleman thinks that people earning up to £175 a week are well paid, I ask him to examine his monthly pay cheques.

It is interesting that in this package the Government recognise the Council of Europe's decency threshold. The aim of all EEC Governments should be that no one should be paid an income below that threshold. For Britain, that would be a little more than £175 a week. The people about whom we are talking are, by definition, low paid. Conservative Members must not talk as if people on less than £175 are well off and can afford to lose out when they are sick in order to help other needy groups.

Under this package, 3 million people earning between £125 and £175 a week will lose up to £9 a week when they are sick. That is in addition to the 2 million people who were deprived in that way last year. Five million people will lose out significantly on the amount that they are paid when sick. Because there was no uprating in line with inflation, those earning more than £175 a week will lose up to £5·70 a week. The Government are hiding behind inflation to impose a cut on sick people. There is also no doubt that the changes will make it more difficult for people who have been sick, who are mentally ill or who are recovering from serious illnesses such as a stroke to obtain employment.

When the Secretary of State quotes studies showing that people with disabilities are reliable workers, and therefore claims that the package will not affect them, he talks as if they are a group with a firmly defined difficulty that does not include all those who have had some sickness and difficulty in their lives and are beginning to join the group of those who are low paid and have difficulty in employment because of sickness. We know that the majority of people with disabilities become sick during their working lives—they do not have a disability at birth that affects them throughout their lives. The National Federation of Self Employed and Small Businesses said that the package will lead to much more difficulty for those people in obtaining employment.

I should like hon. Members to reflect personally on that matter. There is too much of a feeling in the House that it is all about some funny people outside who can live on £175 a week and are well paid. No hon. Members who examined their weekly income and outgoings would talk like that.

We are always pleased to see the return of one of our colleagues who has been sick, as happened tonight. The hon. Member for Dudley, West (Dr. Blackburn) referred to his serious illness. I am sure that we were touched by his comments and are glad to see him back. However, I am glad that, during his illness, he did not have to see his income drop to a third of what it otherwise would have been and that he and his family did not have not only the worry about his illness but the worry about whether they could find the money to pay the bills while he was ill.

We all share these values, but only for us, only for the higher-paid in society. Meanwhile, we vote for a measure that would increase the insecurity and worries of lower-paid people. That is what we have in front of us. There are two nations—a point that should mean something to Conservative Members, especially when they are trying to restore their image and to show that they are not in favour of such a bitterly divided nation. We are talking about people earning only £125 a week being paid £43·50 a week and about people earning more than that being paid £52·50 a week. Imagine keeping one's family on those amounts.

Mr. Newton *rose*——

Ms. Short: Let me continue and I shall give way later to the right hon. Gentleman. I am sure that I know what he is going to say.

The Government are deceitful—I repeat the serious word used by my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher)—about the evidence on the existence of occupational sick pay schemes. I am shocked that the Secretary of State so often stresses the misleading figure claiming that 90 per cent. of employees work in firms that provide occupational sick pay for some of their workers, and from that tries to hint that most people are covered. We know that that is not the case. A false excuse—a

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misrepresentation of research—is being used to justify a cut in the income of sick people. I thought more highly than that of the right hon. Gentleman.

As hon. Members will be aware, the Disability Alliance represents a federation of 80 organisations concerned with the interests of people with disabilities. It is its strong view that

"the Government have grossly distorted the findings of its research. A closer look reveals that 44 per cent. of all private sector firms and over half, that is 55 per cent. of firms with less than 10 employees, which in turn accounts for 75 per cent. of all firms, have no scheme whatsoever."

That is the reality.

We know that many firms and organisations that have schemes do not provide for all their workers. The management and the white-collar workers are more likely to be provided for than the low-paid and manual workers. The Bill will cut the income of low-paid workers when they are sick, many of whom will have no other income to support their family. That is outrageous and the Secretary of State should be ashamed of himself.

Mr. Newton: I do not intend to go over the ground that I covered in my speech, although my right hon. Friend the Minister will no doubt say a word or two more about the statistics. I want to pick up the hon. Lady on her assertion that those workers have no other income when they are sick. Surely she realises that people with family responsibilities and no other income are entitled to income support—whether last year, this year, next year or the year after. For a man supporting a wife and two children, at no time during recent years would sickness benefit or statutory sick pay have provided his whole income. He would be entitled to income support at the normal rate. The hon. Lady should at least acknowledge that.

Ms. Short: If the right hon. Gentleman represented a constituency such as mine, he would know that many families with an income as low as £125 to £175 a week do not like being dependent on benefit. That is one reason why many low-income families do not claim family credit. They juggle their child care responsibilities so that both partners can work—usually with an even lower income for the wife—and maintain their family. If one of the working partners becomes sick, they will not be eligible for income support and they will also lose about £80 a week to the family budget at a time of worry and sickness.

Of course, the right hon. Gentleman is technically correct to say that those dependent on low pay, who have no other income and are therefore falling below the level necessary to exist, would be eligible for income support, but there is no doubt that the figures for those claiming it are low. Many families will be faced with both the worry of sickness and a large drop in their income. The Secretary of State's package will make that very much worse.

It is true, as my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) strongly asserted, that the changes are part of a process in the constant erosion of the ideas and principles of the national insurance scheme. There is no doubt that the Government and Conservative Members hate—on the basis of ideology, not from any rational examination—the idea of any state provision that cares for all of us. They want to privatise pension provision and sickness provision. That is a much worse system.

We all know and understand that the pattern employment are changing and that we are all like change jobs on a number of occasions during our wo lives. We therefore need flexible pension provisions th can carry with us when we change jobs, and the flexible is the state scheme. One can take it whereve works. It covers everyone. It has no holes. Everyone into it when they are doing okay, and can afford to and it offers protection if something happens neighbour, friend, or to oneself. We are part of a s that provides a basic level of security.

Under SERPS, it is possible to opt out, but the scheme provides a minimum standard for all. I like provision, and the same should apply to sick pay should all pay into a scheme according to our income be protected according to our needs. I am happy for to be opting out or enhancements to that arrangemen the existing provision offers the most flexible and way of providing everyone with insurance—for t what it is. Why have a lot of competing and ineff systems when there can be one national scheme provides a basic minimum for all? However, we favour also of private and topping-up schemes enhance the desirable minimum arrangement.

Conservative Members do not agree with suc arrangement. They hate the national insurance syste the idea of any state provision. They try constant erode it and to break it up, and the Bill is part o ideological destructiveness—quite apart from st £100 million from sick and low-paid workers.

It is clear from the contributions of Conser Members that they have no regard for the points ma for example, the Low Pay Unit, which is deeply w about the effect of the changes on low-paid workers. surprised that Government Members made no refere the briefing from the Disability Alliance, which i deeply opposed to the changes, believing that the seriously harm the disabled and make it more difficu those with a record of illness, or who are recovering a serious illness, to obtain employment. Conser Members showed little concern also about the submi made by the National Federation of Self Employe Small Businesses, which is also strongly opposed Bill. We oppose it both for its likely effects on the sic because of the strain that it will impose on employers.

The Bill has been introduced disgracefully quickl without consultation, partly to achieve savings, bu will not begin to be made until next April. Therefor legislation could have been dealt with more gracefully Government acted in the way that they did to consultation. They were defeated before by bu organisations. When there was a previous risk that th scheme would not be fully funded, the business comm made such a fuss, and placed so much pressure on p such as the hon. Member for Newark (Mr. Alexa who served on the relevant Committee, tha Government were forced to give in and to go for 1 cent. reimbursement.

The Bill is receiving its Second Reading today, an have its Committee stage on the Floor of the Hous Report on Wednesday, so that it can be passed wi giving the small business organisations time to mobi stop it. As the hon. Member for Newark clearly sai Government are breaking their word and the pro that they made in the past.

The National Federation of Self Employed and Small Businesses received an undertaking that there would be full funding, but now—and without any consultation—that is being done away with. The federation says that the Government are dishonourable and have broken their word. The federation is also deeply worried that the Bill will reduce reimbursement not only from 100 per cent. to 80 per cent., but down to zero if necessary. It is worried that the intention is to withdraw all state funding of statutory sick pay, and there is no other explanation for the Bill. If the Government simply wanted to save £100 million, they could do so by failing to uprate or to change the thresholds, which would not require the Bill. It is needed to give the Government the power in future to cut the amount that is reimbursed to small businesses.

Currently, the package is neutral, in that businesses will lose £250 million, but will be paid £250 million this year. However, as the Secretary of State acknowledged, that does not mean that individual businesses will not lose out. He gave two examples of ways in which small firms could gain, but that must mean that others will be losers, depending on the types of occupation, the region, different types of small firms, and the different levels of sickness in certain occupations and regions involved, and so on.

There is no point to the Bill, and the Government would not have put it together unless they intended to erode the funding of SSP over the years. We should not go to all that trouble for a neutral package—there would be no point. It would be meaningless. We already have figures that show the extent of Government savings next year and the year after, and they are higher. The Government have given no undertaking that reimbursement to businesses will be equal in future years to the figure in the Bill. Erosion will start next year and will continue the year after, even if there is no change in the reimbursement to business.

There is no doubt that the Government are planning to disengage from sick pay and pass on the burden to employers. There is no other explanation. It is impossible to explain the Bill in any other way. I think that the hon. Member for Beverley (Mr. Cran) understood that very well and stated it in the cautious way that a Conservative Member who supports the Government has to. If any hon. Member thinks seriously, there is no other explanation why the Bill should be before the House.

The National Federation of Self Employed and Small Businesses also said that the measures will hurt the sick and that a national insurance scheme is essential for small businesses. Small organisations cannot possibly organise insurance, firm by firm, to protect their employees. We agree. We think that statutory sick pay is good for people and good for small businesses. The Government are attacking the principle of national insurance.

The hon. Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King) offered an interesting argument. If he is right, all the assurances that we have been given by the Government are wrong. He said that we should make employers pay when their employees are sick, because that would make them organise health programmes for their employees.

Mr. Roger King: No.

Ms. Short: I thought that that was the substance of the hon. Gentleman's speech. I also thought that about 90 per cent. of it was out of order, but clearly I was wrong as no one called him to order. His programme depends upon punishing employers, charging them more, to encourage them to develop health programmes for their employees. That was his whole argument. He let the cat out of the bag. He does not support what the Secretary of State says, although he asserts that he does, but he wants to punish employers, to force them to make employees go into health programmes.

That is that package before us, and it is very unappetising. Why do we have it? One reason is the plan for the future, which will punish businesses more and phase out any national system of protection for sick pay, but there are other reasons. That leads us to the uprating statement. The Government were becoming more and more embarrassed by their failure to increase child benefit. They claim to be the party of the family, but they were reducing the value of child benefit—the benefit that demonstrates the costs and value of children that we recognise as a society and pay.

The Government were embarrassed. In the end they came up with a package that contained some increase for the first-born. How were they to pay for it, as the Treasury required a neutral uprating package, with no extra money for social security? By stealing money off the low-paid sick.

The other embarrassment for the Government was high levels of poverty among pensioners dependent upon state pensions, because they have broken the link between earnings and state pensions and such pensioners are falling further and further behind the rest of society. So we got a special little bonus for very poor elderly pensioners, which is to be paid for by the low-paid sick. The third group that will benefit from the cut are poor, frail, elderly people in residential homes, who are in danger of eviction.

Of course, we want to protect the elderly sick, we want to increase child benefit, and we certainly do not want frail elderly people to be thrown out of residential homes. However, we think that it is an outrage and a disgrace that the low-paid sick should be required to pay.

The Government have deliberately made enormous cuts in taxation for the richest people in our society. The figures are shocking. Virtually every time we discuss social security I quote them, and I shall do so again. They are the answer to every Conservative Member who picks up the Conservative central office briefing, and who asks how we can possibly find the money for £900 million in sick pay for the nation—or whatever the figure may be.

Taking into consideration the combined effect of cumulative tax and benefit changes from 1979 to 1988, since the Conservatives came into power—so it is worse than this now—a serious publication by John Hill, which I recommend to any hon. Members who want to check it out, states:

"Remarkably what has happened has been a virtual zero net cost reform. The cuts in direct taxes have been entirely paid for by cuts in the generosity of benefits. There has indeed been a major redistribution from those on low incomes to the better off. Overall, the bottom 60 per cent. of the income distribution has lost, while the top 30 per cent., especially the top 10 per cent., has gained. The losses for the bottom 50 per cent. average out at nearly £8·50 per family—a substantial proportion of their net incomes—while the top 10 per cent. have gained nearly £40 per family. Overall, the bottom half of the population has lost £6·6 billion, of which £5·6 billion has gone to the top 10 per cent., and indeed £4·8 billion has gone to the top 5 per cent."

The figures are worsened by two further years of the erosion of pensions and child benefit and, of course, by the

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poll tax. There is no money for child benefit or for the frail elderly sick because you have given it all in tax cuts to your very rich friends——

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Ms. Short: I am sorry, Mr. Speaker. The Government have done that.

I understand that in the leadership contest for the Conservative party, the Secretary of State supports the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who keeps forcing all these cuts on him. The Conservative party had to get rid of the Prime Minister because she is disliked by large parts of the British population and because her Government made our society so unequal, so unfair and so divided. The Bill introduces a further package of such unpopular measures. All three candidates for leadership of the Conservative party support the changes. Whoever leads it, we oppose the 11 years of redistribution and inequality. It has damaged our country, made it more unjust and more unequal, and the Bill is a further example of that.

9.41 pm

The Minister for Social Security and Disabled People (Mr. Nicholas Scott): I doubt that our proceedings will find a place in *The Guinness Book of Records*, unless it is for the record number of interventions that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State allowed. Before the hon. Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) leaves, it was bizarre for her to criticise him for speaking for an hour and a quarter of embarrassment. He spoke for that length of time because he was concerned, with his usual courtesy, to allow hon. Members, mainly Labour Members, to intervene. Her charge hardly hits the target.

We have had a long debate on a Bill that has only one substantive clause and two consequent ones. I make no complaint about that. Several themes have emerged to which I shall try to reply.

I must tell my hon. Friends the Members for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) and for Newark (Mr. Alexander) that, in the time available, I do not propose to go down the route that they invited me to tread about a wholly different structure for social security benefits. When I was first told the time that I might have to reply to the debate, I might have been tempted to take that route, but as the time has been filled so satisfactorily it is not necessary.

I shall deal, first, with the important point about whether we propose any change or whether we have broken a pledge made when we moved to the statutory sick pay scheme. I was elsewhere when the scheme was introduced and subsequent changes were made, but I acknowledge that the method of reimbursement was a major factor in discussions with employers and their organisations before SSP was introduced in 1983. I can trace no guarantee that the Government, having launched the scheme on the old basis, would not wish to review the position once employers had experience of operating SSP and in the light of other developments. That is precisely what the Government are doing under the Bill.

My hon. Friend the Member for Beverley (Mr. Cran), the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) and other hon. Members sought assurances about our future plans for the reimbursement rate. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State made it clear that we have no plans for any further changes—up or down. In the before becoming a Member, I used to say that the of Lords was littered with Ministers who had said "I It would therefore be pretty unwise of me to tal route today. All these matters will have to be consid the light of future circumstances.

The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland whether, if adjustments are made, changes would b at the same time in the national insurance contri These are two quite separate matters. As my righ Friend said, this year we are considering the change context of reductions to be made in national ins contributions. The two, however, are not linked. Th statutory duty that my right hon. Friend has when h at the national insurance fund is to consider the inc and outgoings from the fund and to decide what c may be necessary.

Of course, it would be desirable further to contributions to the national insurance fund in o ease the burden of different levels of pay outside, b has to be considered separately from anything tha hypothetically happen to levels of reimbursem statutory sick pay.

Mr. Wallace: The Secretary of State made great the fact that, although more money will com employers after the Bill is passed, there are neve compensating features in terms of national ins contributions. Is the Minister saying that in futur employers will be unable to expect automatic compe reductions in their national insurance contributions?

Mr. Scott: The hon. Gentleman has leapt a nu fences. I have already said that we have no plans t either up or down, the rate of reimbursement for st sick pay. This year we have looked at the pr changes in the light of reductions in national in contributions. We should have to see where we we ever wanted to consider changing the rate of rei ment either up or down.

Opposition Members have criticised the statutory sick pay package because of what I regar fairly modest shift in the balance of short-term s provision between the state and business which wi from the changes. They got quite excited at tim made, in my view, some totally unjustifiable alle about the effects of the proposals on employees. return to those accusations later.

I have to disappoint the hon. Member for Ashfi Haynes), who, I see, has changed his place, ju changed mine earlier in the debate, by saying tha not seek to withdraw the Bill at this time.

One of the most bizarre accusations in the deb that made by the hon. Member for Birmi Ladywood (Ms. Short), both in an earlier interven alluded to in her wind-up speech. She accu Government of seeking quick passage of the legisl avoid criticism by the small employers lobby. I beli to be an absolutely ridiculous accusation. If it w case, we should not have sent copies of my rig Friend's uprating statement to those organisatio should we have sent them copies of the Bill—whic immediately after it was presented to Parliament. moving more quickly, simply to give employers make arrangements to operate the new rates and for the changes. That is sensible.

Some of my hon. Friends expressed concern about the cost to employers, particularly small employers. I shall seek to deal with their concerns. The House will not be surprised to hear that, as Minister for Social Security and Disabled People, I am particularly concerned about some of the suggestions regarding the impact of the changes on those who are disabled or handicapped. In particular, a number of hon. Members suggested that the result of the proposals will be that employers will be less likely to employ people with disablilities, or those who suffer from bad health.

That is something which is close to my heart. I should be very concerned if it were to turn out to be true. However, I strongly believe that that will not be the case. My right hon. Friend made it clear in his opening speech that charges of that nature have surfaced in the past, both when statutory sick pay was first introduced and later when it was extended to 28 weeks. However, they have never been substantiated. If that were happening, I am confident that I should have heard about it. In fact, what evidence there is points in the opposite direction.

In general, people with disabilities—this point was made by a number of my hon. Friends and also by the hon. Member for Carlisle (Mr. Martlew)—do not have bad attendance records. Often they are better than those of able-bodied people. Patricia Prescott-Clarke, of Social and Community Planning Research, found that half the people with disabilities in work took fewer than five days a year off work for sickness or treatment. Over a five-year period, half of them had not had a spell of sickness or treatment lasting a month. There is no suggestion there that the employment of a disabled person would lead to increased costs for the employer.

It has been the constant endeavour, not just of this Government but of successive Governments in recent years, to make employers increasingly aware of the abilities of disabled people. The Department of Employment continues to work to get employers to see facts such as these and also the advantages and opportunities that the employment of the disabled can provide. In the past year, the Department of Employment spent about £350 million obtaining employment for disabled people and keeping them in employment. I hope that we shall be able to break down progressively any reservations felt by employers about employing them.

As I have said before in the House, the pressures of demography—and, certainly, the application by employers of enlightened self-interest—will increasingly make it imperative for employers to look for the skills that disabled people are able to bring to the job market.

Mr. Flynn: I am sure that the Minister is sincere; however, it has already been pointed out that his Department has employed less than half the quota of people with disabilities. That is slightly better than the record of the other Departments—1·1 per cent.—but should not he and the Government lead by example?

Mr. Scott: I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman has felt it necessary to repeat what he said earlier. I note that the hon. Member for Carlisle (Mr. Martlew) disagreed with him.

The quota is for registered disabled people. Many thousands of disabled people do not want to hang the "registered disabled" label round their necks. If every employer in the country sought to employ a 3 per cent. quota, there would not be enough registered disabled people to go round. I think that it is much better to operate on a broader front, encouraging employers to respond to the skill shortages that will appear increasingly in the economy, improving access to buildings—workshops, factories and so on—introducing new technology to help disabled people to earn their living and, not least, implementing the new benefit that we shall introduce in 1992: the disability working allowance, which will provide immense encouragement for disabled people to earn their own living.

Mr. Haynes: What about the firms which do not take on any disabled people, although they are able to do so?

Mr. Scott: As I said, I believe that the way forward lies in encouragement and example. Many employers not only take on disabled people but communicate their experience of employing them to other employers, encouraging them to follow their good example. That, surely, is a much better approach.

It has been said that some of those who lobby on behalf of small employers sometimes overstate their case. That may be true, but none of them approaches the record of the hon. Members for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) and for Ladywood in overstating theirs in successive debates. Much has been said during the debate about the effects that the changes contained in the Bill will have on small employers, and I accept that there is genuine worry on both sides of the House. I have seen the representations made by various organisations, and I understand their concern. It is because we appreciated that the changes might hit smaller employers harder that we have weighted the reductions in national insurance contributions in the way that we did.

By reducing the employers' national insurance contributions for rates of pay up to £185 a week by 0·4 per cent.—not 0·25 per cent., as was suggested by the hon. Member for Oldham, West—as against a reduction of 0·05 per cent. for those earning more than that amount, we are weighting the reductions in respect of employees who will be on the lower rate of SSP. Therefore, the savings for small employers—my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State gave examples in his opening speech—will be proportionately greater than those for other employers and, in some instances, will more than match any extra SSP costs. I am not sure that that has yet been fully appreciated by the small employers' organisations.

The present Government have a good record of pursuing policies that assist small employers. The taxation structure has been dramatically simplified since 1979 for both individuals and small firms; overall rates of taxation are lower, and special rates of corporation and capital tax operate for small employers.

Moreover, the number of special schemes and training services set up by the Government is substantial. Let me mention just a few. There is the loan guarantee scheme which, since its inception in 1981, has issued more than 25,000 guarantees for loans totalling over £837 million. A report by independent consultants has confirmed that the scheme meets a real need in small firms finance. There is also the business expansion scheme, the activities and programmes of the Training Agency, the enterprise allowance scheme and the business growth scheme. No one can accuse the Government of not caring about small

[Mr. Scott]

firms; quite the reverse. I hope that the small firms' interests and hon. Members who are concerned about their needs will recognise that.

One must take into account the following three factors. First, over half all statutory sick pay spells are over within two weeks and 90 per cent. are over within eight weeks. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said, the average spell is three weeks. Secondly, the savings that will be achieved are only a small fraction—some 0·05 per cent.—of the labour costs over the economy as a whole, which are estimated to be about £300 billion. Thirdly, the reduction in national insurance contributions, which is the important context of these changes, will provide worthwhile savings to employers.

It is clear from this debate that the impact on individual employers will not be as significant as some may have feared. The Government believe that such additional costs as may transfer from the state to employers are not unreasonable.

Some hon. Members, particularly Labour Members, have suggested that many employers cannot cope with SSP and often get it wrong. Even worse, some employers dismiss employees rather than pay SSP which, incidentally, is against the law. Reference has been made to the recent report by the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux entitled "Hard Labour".

Mr. Martlew: Will the Minister elaborate on that point? Which law would be broken if a person were dismissed on those grounds?

Mr. Scott: Employment protection legislation.

Mr. Martlew: That does not always apply.

Mr. Scott: So long as a person has been working for a reasonable time for the employer——

Mr. Martlew: Two years.

Mr. Scott: Yes, I accept that point.

My right hon. Friend and I have seen the report. Although it deals mainly with employment protection and wages matters, it includes some references to SSP. The Department has already sent to NACAB a detailed reply on all the recommendations relating to Department of Social Security responsibilities. Despite some individual cases cited, which hon. Members have mentioned tonight, it is certainly not our experience that employers cannot operate the scheme.

Over the past two years we have made considerable efforts better to inform employers about SSP. We have employed outside market research consultants and the SSP guide for employers has been completely revised in both content and presentation. A quick guide has been introduced which employers can use in straightforward cases. A wall chart and a video have also been made available. I can tell the House that the new literature has been widely welcomed by business.

In addition, the Department provides a freeline telephone inquiry service directly for employers about national insurance contributions, SSP and statutory maternity pay, plus a free seminar service. Since January, well-attended seminars have been held in many major towns and cities.

I should also point out that the Departm representative employers panel, consisting of large employers and their organisations. It in example, the National Federation of Self Emp Small Businesses and the CBI. They are consulted by us.

I accept that there will always be small emp will be unsure about some aspects of the sche because they need to operate SSP only infreque that the House will agree that the initiatives th taken and will continue to take will greatly problems.

Finally, if NACAB, the Low Pay Unit or organisation uncovers what it believes malpractice or mistakes by an employer, it sh local social security office know immediat procedure is put into operation when an considers that he has been wrongly denied SS being paid the correct amount. The employee for a formal decision from the adjudication o local DSS office. Where an employer fails to c a decision of the adjudicating authorities prescribed time, responsibility for paying SSP p DSS, which will at the same time consider fur against the employer. The employee is the protected, if the correct action is taken promp

Much has been said during the deb occupational sick pay coverage, and Oppositio have called into question the Government's as the majority of employees will have any differ entitlement made up by occupational sick research was carried out by a responsible and international consultancy organisation and it information that we base our claims that, alth not know exactly how many people are cove pay schemes, 90 per cent. of firms have such

We have had a good debate. The Gover taken the right steps and I commend the Bill to

Question put, That the Bill be now read time:—

The House divided: Ayes 231, Noes 119

Division No. 11]

AYES

Aitken, Jonathan	Browne, John *(Wi*
Alexander, Richard	Bruce, Ian *(Dorset*
Alison, Rt Hon Michael	Burns, Simon
Allason, Rupert	Burt, Alistair
Amess, David	Butterfill, John
Amos, Alan	Carlisle, John, *(Lu*
Arbuthnot, James	Carlisle, Kenneth
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*	Carrington, Matthe
Arnold, Sir Thomas	Cash, William
Ashby, David	Chalker, Rt Hon M
Aspinwall, Jack	Channon, Rt Hon
Atkins, Robert	Chapman, Sydney
Atkinson, David	Chope, Christophe
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*	Clark, Sir W. *(Cro*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*	Clarke, Rt Hon K.
Batiste, Spencer	Coombs, Simon *(S*
Bellingham, Henry	Cormack, Patrick
Bendall, Vivian	Couchman, James
Benyon, W.	Cran, James
Bevan, David Gilroy	Davies, Q. *(Stamf*
Blackburn, Dr John G.	Davis, David *(Boo*
Boscawen, Hon Robert	Day, Stephen
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*	Devlin, Tim
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*	Dover, Den
Brazier, Julian	Dunn, Bob
Bright, Graham	Durant, Tony
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*	Dykes, Hugh

Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Sir Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Paice, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Roberts, Sir Wyn *(Conwy)*
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Irvine Patnick and
Mr. Tim Boswell.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Beckett, Margaret
Bellotti, David
Bermingham, Gerald
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clelland, David
Coleman, Donald
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Galloway, George
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Golding, Mrs Llin
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Heal, Mrs Sylvia
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Ilsley, Eric
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kilfedder, James
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martlew, Eric
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
O'Brien, William
Pike, Peter L.
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Redmond, Martin
Richardson, Jo
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terence
Rowlands, Ted
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Soley, Clive
Strang, Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. John Battle.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill read a Second time.

Bill committed to a Committee of the whole House.—*[Mr. Sackville.]*

STATUTORY SICK PAY BILL *[Money]*

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—

Resolved,

That for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Statutory Sick Pay Bill it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of any administrative expenses incurred in consequence of the Act by a Minister of the Crown.—*[Mr. Sackville.]*

Civil Jurisdiction and Ju

10.15 pm

The Solicitor-General (Sir Nicholas
move,

That the draft Civil Jurisdiction and Ju
(Amendment) Order 1990, which was laid
on 7th November, be approved.

The purpose of this Order in Counci
United Kingdom to ratify the conventio
and Portugal acceded to the 1968 Bruss
jurisdiction and the enforcement of judg
commercial matters as well as to the 19

The Brussels convention establishe
determine the international jurisdiction c
member states, to facilitate recognition
an expeditious procedure for securing th
judgments within the Community. Th
confers jurisdiction on the Court o
Community to interpret the convention

On becoming a member of the Com
undertakes to accede to the Brussels co
protocol. The United Kingdom, Denm
acceded by a convention signed on 9 Oct
Brussels convention is now in force in ea
Greece acceded by a convention signe
1982. That convention was ratified
Kingdom last year and came into force o
The convention on the accession of Sp
the two final states, was signed on 26 M

Section 14 of the Civil Jurisdiction a
1982 provides that Her Majesty may by
make such modifications of the Act
appropriate in consequence of any revis
convention or the protocol. The greater
order consists of schedules replacing tho
1982 Act.

I shall now deal with changes
convention. There are two elements to th
to the 1968 convention by this accession
there are those changes which are di
upon Spanish and Portuguese accessio
convention and, secondly, there are
substance. The former are reflected in a
text of the 1982 Act, and include revise
conventions and of contracting states.

Article 8 amends section 3 of th
consideration by United Kingdom cou
the meaning or effect of any provisio
convention or the accession convention
the report on the Spanish and Por
convention drawn up by three emin
Martinho de Almeida Cruz from Port
Desantes Real from Spain and the ho
administration at the Belgian Ministry
Monsieur Paul Jenard, to whom all ho
expect me to pay special tribute, and
immeasurable contribution to this work
years. Section 3 already permits
corresponding reports on the Brussels
the earlier accession conventions.

There are just a few changes of sub
of the Brussels convention. The Civi
Judgments Bill was introduced in an
November. The object of that Bill is to

Kingdom to ratify the Lugano convention on jurisdiction and the enforcement of judgments. That convention was drawn up between the member states of the European Community and the member states of the European Free Trade Association, and creates a régime between the states of those two organisations parallel to that of the Brussels convention. Although the provisions of the Lugano convention follow, so far as is appropriate, those of the Brussels convention, the opportunity was taken to incorporate some changes deemed to be necessary in the light of 20 years' experience of the practical operation of the Brussels regime.

Given the parallel nature of these two conventions, it was considered desirable by the working party negotiating the Spanish and Portuguese accession convention to take that opportunity to reflect—if I might call them this—the Lugano improvements back into the 1968 Brussels convention.

Most of these changes are minor, and I shall highlight only three of the more significant. They affect, in matters of detail, the rules on jurisdiction in title II of the 1968 convention. The relevant articles are articles 5, 6 and 16 relating respectively to contracts of employment, matters relating to a contract where the action may be combined with an action relating to rights in rem, and proceedings having as their object tenancies of property for temporary private use.

Thus, in article 5, instead of treating employment contracts in the same manner as all other contracts, it has been decided to introduce an additional element of protection for the employee. Article 6 of the Brussels convention sets out various situations in which a person domiciled in a contracting state may be sued. The Lugano convention added an additional category, and this is now imported into the 1968 convention.

Thus, the revised article permits a person domiciled in a contracting state also to be sued in matters relating to the contract, if the action may be combined with an action against the same defendant in matters relating to rights in property in the court of the contracting state in which that property is situated.

The decision of the Court of Justice in Rösler *v.* Rottwinkel in 1985 had thrown up a problem in connection with short lets. The court had found itself obliged to interpret article 16(1) literally as meaning that the courts for the place where the property was situated should have exclusive jurisdiction over all actions relating to the property, even in a dispute over rent on a short-term holiday letting in Italy where lessor and tenant were both domiciled in Germany.

The amended form of article 16 will allow jurisdiction to be asserted either by courts of the contracting state in which the property is situated or, in proceedings which have as their object tenancies of property for private use of up to six months, in the courts of the contracting state in which the defendant is domiciled, so long as both the landlord and the tenant are natural persons and are domiciled in the same state. Accordingly, a dispute between an English landlord and tenant over a holiday letting in the Dordogne may now sensibly be heard in the English courts.

These and other changes represent useful improvements, and are to be welcomed. I commend the order to the House as a useful step in the creation of a system of judicial co-operation not only within the Community, but throughout western Europe.

10.22 pm

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): This may not particularly interesting order, but it is a remarkab to the civilised way in which Europe now deals w matters. Fifty years ago, it would have been impo contemplate a common code of jurisdicti enforcement of judgments throughout western referring specifically to the internal jurisdiction country. These are lawyers' matters, but we shoul the order pass without paying tribute to those w contributed to the convention, because it is a s civilised society that such matters can be dealt wi same basis throughout western Europe.

I have two questions. The first is about access Lugano arrangements are in force when one accedes to them. Is it intended that the whol European Community should accede as of on Brussels convention, rather than acceding na nation? Secondly, to what extent are these arrange be extended to countries that are neither in the E Free Trade Association nor the European Con but are full associates of the Community? One ex Turkey, and clearly, if possible, the same arran should apply to such countries.

10.23 pm

The Solicitor-General: With the leave of the shall reply. It is not intended that we should wait member states are in a position to accede. They ca one by one, and it is hoped to make progress soo extension would require further international agr and does not follow from the Brussels and conventions in themselves. One very much hopes sort of international agreement, so rightly comme the hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser), extended further in due course throughout the world.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Civil Jurisdiction and Judgments (Amendment) Order 1990, which was laid before th on 7th November, be approved.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Audit Practice

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pur Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Comm Statutory Instruments, &c.).

That the draft Code of Audit Practice for Engl Wales, which was laid before this House on 15th Oc the last Session of Parliament, be approved *Sackville.]*

Question agreed to.

International Monetary Fund

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pur Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Comm Statutory Instruments, &c.).

That the draft International Monetary Fund (In Subscription) Order 1990, which was laid before th on 15th October, in the last Session of Parlian approved.—*[Mr. Sackville.]*

Question agreed to.

Criminal Justice (Northern Ireland)

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

That the draft Criminal Justice (Confiscation) (Northern Ireland) Order 1990, which was laid before this House on 15th October, in the last Session of Parliament, be approved.—*[Mr. Sackville.]*

Question agreed to.

Asylum Seekers

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Sackville.]*

10.25 pm

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): I am pleased that I have been able to secure an Adjournment debate on the treatment of asylum seekers when they arrive in the United Kingdom. This extremely important matter is not necessarily overwhelmingly popular and does not always grasp front-page headlines daily. The principles involved must be addressed, partly because Britain has not been invaded over the past 1,000 years and partly because few people from this country have ever sought political asylum abroad—as far as I am aware, not since the days of religious persecution hundreds of years ago. However, there is a popular understanding of the need for people to be able to seek political asylum when their survival is in danger. The most recent examples relate to the horrors faced by the Jewish people who fled from the Nazi regime in Germany in the 1930s and sought asylum. Some succeeded in getting asylum in this country, but tragically many found that the doors of the rest of the world were barred in their search for safety.

I have introduced the debate at this time because of a series of extremely disturbing reports in the press at the end of October and at the beginning of this month that the United Kingdom Government were undertaking a review of their procedures to deal with asylum seekers. I read those reports with some disquiet. Since I have become a Member, I have spent a lot of time dealing with the problems of asylum seekers from many countries, including Iran, Iraq, Chile, Colombia and a number of Asian countries, particularly Sri Lanka and China. Many of the people involved went through horrific experiences to get to safety.

The 1951 Geneva convention, which is the major article of faith dealing with asylum seekers, was signed after the war to cover the large numbers who sought political asylum from Nazi Germany before the war and immediately after it because of all the disruptions throughout Europe. The convention states that people seeking political asylum must have a well-founded fear of being persecuted. Obviously, that is open to wide definition. It does not have to mean that people were politically active before a hostile regime took over. It could mean that they were in danger of being persecuted by association. Many of the people with whom I have dealt and who came from Chile after the fascist regime took over in 1973 were politically active in socialist, communist or other parties and were in danger of persecution if they returned to Chile, as were their relatives and friends. The same applies to Kurdish people from several countries. The definition must be drawn fairly widely.

The British Government have claimed that many people seek political asylum in Britain. According to a parliamentary answer by the Home Office at columns *452-53* of *Hansard* of 30 October, 27,170 people are seeking political asylum. Of the European countries, the largest number comes from Turkey, with 1,690; of the African countries, the largest number come from Somalia, with 2,990; and of the Asian countries, the largest number come from Sri Lanka, with 4,950.

Those people have come to this country because they believe themselves to be in some danger. It is important

that someone who arrives in this country seeking political asylum should be sure, first, that his application will be properly received at the port of entry; secondly, that he will be interviewed in his own language; and, thirdly, that he will not be removed from this country until the application has been properly assessed and a decision taken.

There have been criticisms of the Government's system for many years. When I first came to the House, the Government used to use, as a defence for the lack of an appeals system against refusals of political asylum, the fact that Members of Parliament could raise cases directly with the Home Office Minister. That right was taken from us when the immigration rules were changed. Now, Members of Parliament have to have new and compelling evidence.

In 1987, an especially disgraceful piece of legislation passed through the House—the Immigration (Carriers' Liability) Act. Under that Act, a carrier—an airline or a shipping company—can be fined if it brings here someone from a visa country who is not subsequently admitted. The number of visa countries has increased dramatically during the past few years. Sri Lanka, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nigeria and Ghana were added as, later, were the Maghreb countries. The citizens of many countries now require visas for entry to this country. Of course, a visa does not guarantee admission. If a person is not admitted, the carrier not only has to take him back, but has to pay a fine of £1,000. More than £18 million has been collected in fines since the Act came into operation.

I find the operation of the Act disturbing. It is a charter for those who wish to exploit the horror of people seeking asylum. I know of cases of Kurdish people fleeing from Turkey and seeking asylum in this country who have paid £1,500 for a one-way air ticket when the normal one-way fare is less than £100. That means that the airline can cover its costs if it is fined.

The Amnesty International report cites examples of people not being allowed off an aircraft to make applications for political asylum and then being removed from this country. Amnesty International presented to the Government 33 recommendations for changes in the treatment of asylum applications. It is concerned that people have been wrongly expelled, and gives a figure of 100. It is interesting that in his reply to that, the Home Office Minister admitted that a number of Kurdish asylum seekers from Turkey had been wrongly deported in 1989 and that Sri Lankan Tamils had been deported.

There are a number of recommendations in the report, but the most important is the right of appeal for an asylum seeker. Under the current arrangements, someone arrives in this country having fled the horrors of a civil war and persecution—for example, the civil wars in Somalia and Ethiopia. It is a major and traumatic move to seek asylum abroad. None of us would ever want to have to do it, but it is happening to many people. Their application is processed, but there is no right of appeal other than seeking a judicial review under the rules of natural justice. That is a major error in our procedure. Other countries have an appeals system, and we should also have one.

I am concerned that the current Home Office review on asylum seeking is designed not to improve the system in line with the spirit of the 1951 Geneva convention, but to make the position worse. I noted that in his letter to *The Guardian*, and in his speech at the time of the Amnesty International report, the Minister kept saying that there was a link between economic migrants and people seeking political asylum. It is a little unwise of the Minister to take such a broad-brush approach to the serious problem of people seeking asylum. Cases must be dealt with individually, with great care and in great detail.

Often, people seeking political asylum are from areas of great conflict in which the British Government themselves are not exactly uninvolved. The continuous supply of arms to the Gulf and to Sri Lanka fuelled the problems in those places, and in many others. We look to the British Government not to tighten up on political asylum but to understand its causes, and for some co-ordination of departmental responses, which are currently totally insufficient.

There is no proper appeals system, and there should be. The refugee arrivals project does its best, but it is understaffed and has great difficulty providing an adequate service. Time and time again, I and other hon. Members have had to intervene to ensure that a case is properly dealt with and heard.

I ask the Government to consider a number of other factors. When people seeking political asylum are admitted to this country and leave the airport, or are finally granted right of asylum or exceptional leave to remain here, they need a roof over their head and their children require education. Kurdish asylum seekers arrived here is considerable numbers from Turkey in 1989, because of the persecution that they were suffering, and others were the victims of gas attacks in Iraq, when Saddam Hussein decided to use that form of warfare against the Kurds in northern Iraq. They all arrived here with absolutely nothing, and needed support and help.

Local authorities are obliged by law, rightly, to house those people whom they consider to be vulnerable. It is expensive to do that, and central Government resources should be made available to assist local authorities in meeting their responsibilities. Government money has been made available in small measure in respect of Kurdish asylum seekers, but under the Bellwin top-up scheme, insufficient resources are available because the local authority must make the initial input.

There are also a disturbing number of cases of unaccompanied children arriving in this country, mainly from East Africa—Eritrea and Somalia. Those children come here because their parents have gone missing or have been killed in the civil war, and clearly they are very disturbed. In the name of humanity, those poor children should be given the best possible help and support after the horror that they have been through.

We find instead that some borough councils refuse to deal with those cases under the Children Act 1989, and the children are passed from one place to another in a disturbing and awful way. The Churches and voluntary organisation have done a great deal of work, but responsibility for providing the necessary assistance remains with central Government. It is very expensive to keep children in care. It is not the ideal way of looking after them, but they should receive that immediate initial support.

Mr. Keith Vaz (Leicester, East): The House is indebted to my hon. Friend for raising this matter, but does he agree that it is only one of the issues affecting the immigration and nationality department under the present Government? Did he read the report published last week, which showed that Lunar house is dealing with naturalisation cases at the rate of only 28 a month? If that

[Mr. Keith Vaz]

trend continues, it will clear the backlog only by the end of the next century. Does my hon. Friend agree that there should not only be an inquiry into the way in which Lunar house is currently operating, but a full debate in Government time on that very important issue?

Mr. Corbyn: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for raising that matter because it is important.

I have been trying to describe the problems of those who seek political asylum, the emotional trauma and disturbance that leads up to their search for asylum, and the problems when they arrive. We are not dealing with a group of people who are not highly motivated—quite the contrary. Often people who seek political asylum are extremely highly motivated, and they find it distressing that, having arrived here and made an application for political asylum, it takes a long time to determine the outcome.

Usually the terms of temporary admission or exceptional leave to remain in this country preclude those people from following any gainful employment, and often any form of education. They are in a different limbo land. Understandably they are very upset about it. The last thing that they want is to be a burden upon the rest of the community. They want to make the most positive contribution. Therefore, the speed of the decision is extremely important. My hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) is quite right to draw attention to that fact. I understand that he has been to Lunar house, and has examined the piles of mail sacks that are waiting to be opened there.

There is a social security element to the problem. For some reason that no Minister has ever been able to explain to me or convince me of, people seeking political asylum are eligible for only 90 per cent. of income support. That is blatantly discriminatory. If someone is entitled to income support, he should get 100 per cent. and not 90 per cent. Likewise, the social fund should operate evenly, whether for people seeking asylum or for those who are entitled to access to it under the normal procedure. People seeking political asylum are increasingly being forced to fall back upon those from their own country who have already gained residence or asylum here. That is not a sensible or fair way to carry on.

There is also a European dimension to the problem, because in 1992 the relationship between Britain and the Common Market countries will change. Various groups —the Trevi group, of which Britain is a member, and the Schengen group, are meeting in secret and, as I understand it, are not reporting to anybody. They are coming to all sorts of conclusions and decisions about asylum seekers and about the attitude and policy that will be taken throughout Europe. I understand that, from 1992 onwards, far from a social Europe that is concerned with people seeking political asylum from tensions, dramas and wars, there will be a fortress Europe approach with insufficient recognition and support being given to such people.

I raised this subject because it is very serious. People in this country often find it hard to understand trauma suffered by those fleeing from civil commotion and disturbance. I spend a lot of time talking to those who have sought political asylum. To understand, one must try to put oneself in the place of someone who is living a normal life—reaching middle age, with both children in school and both partners have a reasonable job. Suddenly, everything goes. The Government change. Those people become the focus of persecution, and have to leave the country that they have lived in all their lives. They have to seek a new life abroad. It is a frightening experience for them. Many of them do not wish to do it.

First, it is important that we recognise the causes of inhuman government and regimes, which allow persecution of people for their religious beliefs, social customs, languages or political views. Secondly, we must recognise that, as signatories of the 1951 Geneva convention, we have a very important role to play.

I hope that in the Government's review of that policy, they will not narrow the focus and curtail the rights of asylum seekers. I hope that instead they will recognise that there is a need for the right of appeal against the refusal of political asylum, and that there is a need for co-ordination among Government Departments, so that housing, education and children's needs are considered and so that we have a civilised policy for the future, rather than the extremely mean policy at the moment, which seeks to put the blame on the asylum seeker, rather than on the regime that has forced those poor people to seek ayslum in the first place.

10.43 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Peter Lloyd): The hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) spoke with considerable feeling. No one who knows him doubts his commitment to the cause of refugees. I certainly do not. The difference between us lies in our analysis of the present problems and the nature of some, although not all, of the solutions required.

The United Kingdom has international humanitarian obligations, which have been recognised by all Governments since the war, both Labour and Conservative—not least our obligations under the 1951 United Nations convention. We take them very seriously and alas, there are many people who have only too genuine a reason to fear persecution. However, many people who do not hold such fears claim asylum in the United Kingdom, so it is necessary to distinguish between them.

This year, my right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development will devote £60 million to international humanitarian aid, most of which will be of direct benefit to refugees. She will provide £20 million for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees—the highest ever United Kingdom contribution and one of the three or four highest of all nations. She will devote a further £40 million in other direct forms of aid, including £2·5 million channelled through British voluntary organisations abroad for grass roots projects helping refugees in Africa; £5 million to the United Nations refugee relief agency; and £5 million to the Red Cross. We shall provide nearly £500,000 for immediate reception arrangements for asylum seekers on the first day or two after they arrive here. The purpose of those funds is not only to provide immediate relief where that is needed, but to address the long-term root causes that create migratory pressures.

The Government's record on the treatment of asylum seekers has been generous. Of 55,000 people who claimed asylum in the United Kingdom between 1979 and 1989,

the Government permitted 87 per cent. to stay here. In the same period, we also accepted 21,000 Indo-Chinese refugees.

The hon. Member for Islington, North signally failed to address the dramatic change in the nature of asylum seeking in the past few years that has taken place throughout the western world. Since 1983, when 70,000 applied for asylum in Europe, the number of asylum claimants in Europe has doubled every three years and this year will reach 500,000. In the United Kingdom, the rise has been even more dramatic: the numbers have risen fivefold in two years, from 5,000 a year to 25,000 this year. That is the cause of the present problems and surely all those who comment on those matters should attempt at least to analyse what is happening, and why, before offering solutions.

Migratory pressures have increased for a variety of reasons in recent years, not least because of the cheapness and ease of international air travel. Unsurprisingly, those pressures have searched out the weak points in immigration control, particularly that the lengthy and painstaking procedures for dealing with asylum seekers provide a fairly certain route through the barriers. The result is that as the number of asylum seekers in Europe has risen, the proportion found to be genuinely fleeing persecution has dropped. Last year, it was estimated that 70 per cent. of those seeking asylum in Europe and north America were not refugees within the sense of the United Nations convention, nor had a claim to other humanitarian status. That is not a matter of the Government erecting a higher threshold: the trend has been the same in all countries, even those where there is a right of appeal to an independent body.

As the determination of asylum claims is so lengthy and time-consuming and most people are able to stay on, it is bound to attract some abuse. How else does one explain why the number of asylum seekers from the new democracies of eastern Europe has not diminished or shrunk, but doubled this year? If the hon. Member for Islington, North can explain that in terms of increased persecution, I should be glad to hear it.

Mr. Corbyn: I cannot explain why the number of asylum seekers has increased, but does the Minister accept that sometimes the problem has been that asylum was granted by an old regime but withdrawn by the new regime? For example, the German Democratic Republic, which no longer exists, granted residence to people from third countries—not asylum, but a sort of laissez passer —which has been withdrawn by the united Germany.

Mr. Lloyd: That may be so, but that does not answer the question why the number of asylum seekers from eastern European countries that have become more respectful of human rights in recent years has increased. It is an unpalatable fact, to which the hon. Gentleman referred, that there is an organised international business; middlemen charge high prices for forged papers and brief applicants on how to submit their claims. Over 60 per cent. of applicants arrive on forged papers, or without papers, having passed them back to middlemen on the aircraft, or having destroyed them.

The simple fact is that asylum seeking has become the main source of primary immigration in Europe during the last two or three years and will account for nearly 500,000 new immigrants this year. Last year, it was some 435,000.

We have, quite rightly, an obligation to give entry to anyone who claims asylum until his or her claim has been established, and it is no surprise that there are consequential problems. We are acutely aware of the increased pressure. The hon. Gentleman mentioned the increased pressure on London local authorities in particular. He will also recognise the increased pressure on the refugee section of the Home Office's immigration and nationality department. He calls for two conflicting steps to be taken at a time of increased pressure: that each case should be looked at thoroughly and individually and that the examination of each case should be speeded up. We are determined to maintain our obligation to look at each case thoroughly and individually, but when the numbers increase fivefold, it is not surprising that the queues lengthen.

We are acutely aware of the increased pressure on the statutory services and voluntary organisations and understand the calls for more resources, particularly in London. We are already providing extra funds to enable the refugee arrivals project and the Refugee Council to give immediate help to asylum seekers who need it until the statutory services take over. I am grateful for the work that they are doing.

We have also agreed to consider whether provision could be made for a short-stay reception centre. Last year, the Department of the Environment made special arrangements for those authorities which received the influx of asylum seekers from Turkey, and last week the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, my hon. Friend the Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key) met representatives of the Association of London Authorities about these questions. He awaits further information from them.

The hon. Member for Islington, North also attended that meeting, at which the ALA put forward a plan to buy 1,250 homes for asylum seekers at a capital cost of £100 million. It argued that that was preferable to the £56 million a year that it now spends on bed-and-breakfast accommodation. I see the logic of that argument.

I make no comment on the proposals, which will be examined by my ministerial colleagues in the Department of the Environment, except to draw one comparison. The cost of £100 million, which the ALA proposes for buying 1,250 homes, is rather more than a quarter of the entire budget of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to help the plight of the 14 to 15 million refugees and displaced persons worldwide. The contrast illustrates the strong belief of the Government, which is precisely in line with that of the UNHCR, that the solution to refugee problems cannot lie in encouraging refugees and asylum seekers to come to the west. It is estimated that $5 billion is now being spent on supporting asylum seekers in the west, the majority of whom are not fleeing persecution.

I see that my time is drawing rapidly to a close. The hon. Gentleman raised a number of points, to which I should like to respond. The best course to take is to write to him. I shall also put the answer that the Home Secretary sent to Amnesty International in reply to the 33 important recommendations that it made, but which we feel are somewhat offbeam, or misunderstand the position, or are part of our policy anyway, in the Library, so that both the hon. Gentleman and other hon. Members can read it.

To return to the point about the imbalance between what is spent on processing asylum seekers who have the resources to arrive in the west and the many millions of

[Mr. Lloyd]

displaced people in the rest of the world, I do not believe that that imbalance can make sense as a global strategy for tackling refugee problems. To encourage asiyum seekers to come to the west diverts funding and good will and means that those fleeing persecution find themselves at the ba of the queue for determination of their claims for housi and other support. It can only be to the disadvantage real refugees that we should allow the present misuse asylum seeking to continue.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at five minutes to Eleven o'clo

House of Commons

Tuesday 27 November 1990

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

LONDON DOCKLANDS RAILWAY BILL
Read the Third time, and passed.

MERSEY DOCKS AND HARBOUR BILL *[Lords]*

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL BILL *[Lords]*
Read a Second time, and committed.

Oral Answers to Questions

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Education Expenditure

1. **Mr. Hague:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what has been the increase in absolute spending on education, in total and per pupil, since 1979.

The Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): Direct spending on nursery, primary and secondary schools in England rose from some £4·2 billion in 1979-80 to some £9·2 billion in the latest outturn year, 1988-89. This represents an increase in spending per pupil from some £515 in 1979-80 to £1,360 in 1988-89. That is a real-terms increase over and above inflation of more than 40 per cent.

Mr. Hague: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the figures given in his answer, even when adjusted for inflation, help to explain why most schools are far better equipped for a modern education than they were 10 years ago and have a much better pupil-teacher relationship than they had 10 years ago? Does he also agree that high-quality education does not depend solely on a massive increase in resources, as some Opposition Members sometimes seem to believe?

Mr. Clarke: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I agree with him. The figures that I gave refer to the latest outturn year. The settlement for next year takes standard spending assessments up by 16 per cent., which is a further 10 per cent. ahead of inflation. I strongly agreee with my hon. Friend that with this growth of resources must come ever-better targeting and ever-better measurement of the standards being achieved in our schools through the use of those resources.

Mr. Grocott: The Government's policy of expenditure on city technology colleges means that they are treating pupils unfairly. How can the Secretary of State possibly justify spending £8·5 million of taxpayers' money on one school—the city technology college in Telford—when less than £8 million is being spent on all the other schools in the county? Is not it time the right hon. and learned Gentleman listened to the overwhelming representations that he has had from all sections of the community and scrapped this unfair concept?

Mr. Clarke: I think that the hon. Gentleman's perception is mistaken. The money spent on city technology colleges is not spent at the expense of other schools—it is money which would not otherwise have been spent on education. It is a policy of envy to say that Telford should not have a city technology college unless all pupils can go to it. The CTC is an attractive addition to education facilities in Telford and as the Member representing that town the hon. Gentleman should support it.

Mr. Hunter: I welcome and applaud the increase in absolute spending. Will my right hon. and learned Friend take note that in Hampshire too much money is being held back by the education authority? Will he intensify his approaches to Hampshire education authority to ensure that money is passed on to the schools?

Mr. Clarke: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. We are looking at that very important point and will shortly issue a circular indicating the minimum amount of the total available that should be distributed to schools and the minimum amount within that total which should be based on the number of pupils in each school. That should bring each county and each education authority into line with best practice, which is exactly what my hon. Friend would wish.

Qualifications

2. **Mr. Turner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proposals he has to reform qualifications for 16 to 19-year-olds; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister of State, Department of Education and Science (Mr. Tim Eggar): We are considering proposals for the reform both of academic and of vocational qualifications for 16 to 19-year-olds.

Mr. Turner: I thank the Minister for that answer. I think that he will agree that education provision for 16 to 19-year-olds is rather a shambles. The Minister's answer does not reflect the views about A-levels expressed by his party in the last three to four weeks. When do the Government intend to put forward firm proposals for reforming A-levels and bringing this country into the 1990s?

Mr. Eggar: I am surprised at the hon. Gentleman. He should know perfectly well that we are awaiting proposals from the School Examinations and Assessment Council. Having considered the council's views, we shall then take into account the views of other organisations. I am also surprised at the hon. Gentleman because I should have thought that he would concentrate on the 70 per cent. of 16 to 19-year-olds for whom A-levels are not important, and especially on the need for the reform of vocational qualifications and the need to raise the esteem in which they are held compared with A-levels.

Mr. Michael Morris: As my hon. Friend knows, more than 25 per cent. of A-level pupils come from Headmasters Conference and Headmistresses Conference schools. Will he ensure that there is full consultation with such schools before any decisions are made about a replacement for A-levels?

Mr. Eggar: Yes, the HMC has made known its views on the SEAC principles document. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has already met it to discuss its views.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: Given what the Minister has said about the need to raise the standing of vocational qualifications, with which I agree, does he accept that the best way to do that would be to bring together vocational and academic qualifications in one broader modular system so that the subjects that pupils choose have equal standing and pupils can study a mixture of the two?

Mr. Eggar: If the hon. Gentleman is saying that there is a case for some form of credit transfer between vocational and academic qualifications, we shall certainly consider that. It will be important to ensure that appropriate standards are maintained for both academic and vocational streams.

Local Management of Schools

3. **Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what measures he is considering to encourage local authorities to delegate more control of money to schools.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Michael Fallon): My right hon. and learned Friend and I intend to ensure that as much as is reasonably possible of the schools budget of local authorities should be delegated to schools to manage themselves. We shall be publishing a draft circular next month, which will consult on proposals to that end.

Mr. Coombs: In illustrating the benefits of local management of schools, is my hon. Friend aware that the school of which I am chairman of governors is two teachers better off and plans next year to raise its resources by 50 per cent. as a result of LMS? Given that the proportion of non-teaching staff to total teaching staff is 35 per cent. in some authorities, such as my own, while in some Labour-controlled authorities, such as Coventry, the proportion is as high as 53 per cent., what action is my hon. Friend planning to take to ensure that resources are spent where they should be spent—in the classroom?

Mr. Fallon: Councils are holding back between 17 and 29 per cent. of their schools budget, or between £65,000 and £228,000 per school. Those variations are huge and unacceptable. We shall be proposing a tougher limit to get more money through to the schools.

Mr. Vaz: Does the Minister accept that in certain local authorities, such as Leicestershire, there is insufficient money in the proposed budget to pay for items such as outstanding repairs? Will he give the House the assurance that where there is a strong case for repairs to be carried out before delegation, the Government will come up with the necessary resources before the budgets are delegated?

Mr. Fallon: Councils have substantial resource they are holding back at the centre. In many cases, spending on unnecessary bureaucracy and on administration resources which have been siphe from the schools and could have been spent year repairs and maintenance.

Mr. Pawsey: Does my hon. Friend agree that method of delegating greater financial control fr education authorities to schools would be to local education authorities to go down the maintained schools route because that would ens schools have a better opportunity of decid themselves exactly where their money should be

Mr. Fallon: Yes, a grant-maintained school about 95 per cent. of its schools budget direct, whi then allocate according to its own priorities. Wh councils continue to hold back so much money, a grant-maintained status means a vote for subs more resources.

Ms. Armstrong: Will the Minister confirm th local authority budget was individually approve Department and that what he is actually doing is those local authorities that have substantial resp ties for spending on school transport and school m have held special needs provision centrally?

Mr. Fallon: All the schemes were approved in by my Department, but it was only this autumn saw the precise figures for each of the individu within the budgets. The problem applies metropolitan authorities. For example, New holding back £199,000 per school, and the controlled metropolitan authority of Leeds is hold more than £100,000. Unlike the Opposition, we ca those differences and we intend to do somethi them.

Mr. Franks: My hon. Friend is aware of the record of Cumbria local education authority delegation of funds. Will he make the representations to that authority? Is he awar welcome our right hon. and learned Friend the of State's statement earlier that he intends minimum level of delegation?

Mr. Fallon: Sadly, I have to tell my hon. Fri Cumbria is by far the worst performer in the co that respect, holding back some 28 per cent. of th allocated, which therefore does not get throug schools. We shall certainly ensure that the toug that we propose will apply to Cumbria so that mo goes to the classrooms.

Distance Learning

5. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Secretary of Education and Science whether he has any further to promote distance learning in rural ar

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of S Education and Science (Mr. Alan Howart Government recognise that distance learning me an efficient and effective means of expanding the opportunities available to students living in ru

The Government support the Open university, and are also providing special support for the further development of open and distance learning by local authorities.

Mr. Wallace: I welcome the Minister's positive reply. Is he aware of the whiteboard techniques adopted in Orkney in my constituency, which allow teaching from central point to be disseminated to a number of points? Does he agree that that offers opportunities to keep open schools that might otherwise be closed as well as opportunities for adult education and training? Will the Department carry out a study of what is happening in Orkney and its possible application to other rural and dispersed parts of the country?

Mr. Howarth: I understand that not only the hon. Gentleman, but his right hon. Friend the Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown), recently had the benefit of an electronic whiteboard tutorial in Orkney. I share the hon. Gentleman's view that that technology may well open up useful possibilities for students in remote areas, which could be of great benefit. The Training Agency has sponsored two pilot projects in the highlands and islands, and I look forward with interest to its evaluation of them.

Dr. Thomas: The Minister has already mentioned the Open university. Can he confirm that the Government intend to maintain and, indeed, enhance its level of funding relative to the rest of higher education so that it can maintain its initiative in distance learning throughout the United Kingdom?

Mr. Howarth: The capital and recurrent grants for the Open university total £79·5 million in the current year, and its block recurrent grant will rise by 8·3 per cent. in 1991. That is clear evidence of the Department's firm support for the Open university. As the hon. Gentleman knows, a review is taking place, and the Open university is playing its full part in that. The review is continuing, and conclusions will be reached in due course. Our expectation is that the Open university will find ways to develop its mission, rather than to curtail it.

Mr. Andrew Smith: Does the Minister accept that increasing fees for courses are a deterrent for many people who would like to take the opportunity of studying with the Open university? What is the Government's specific policy on the future level of fees and on support for part-time and distance learning students? Does the Minister accept that they need better support, and what does he intend to do about it?

Mr. Howarth: From the impressive history of the Open university in recent years, it is clear that a large number of people want to study with it and that they have not been deterred by the fees regime. The review is under way, and the issues that the hon. Gentleman raised form part of it.

School Administration (Lancashire)

6. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has any plans to meet the chief education officer of Lancashire county council to discuss the contraction of central administration and transfer of resources to schools for local management; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fallon: My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans at present to meet the chief education officer of Lancashire county council. However, we have made clear our general view that local education authorities should streamline their central administration so that more resources can get down to schools.

Mr. Hind: Is my hon. Friend aware that the county council is holding back £130 million—one third of its revenue budget—for a number of items, particularly central administration? Will he join me in urging the county to spread down much of its central administration costs to schools administered by local management, where funds are much needed and would benefit the children in the classroom?

Mr. Fallon: Yes. Lancashire's central administration alone amounts to £11·5 million. In total, Lancashire holds back 23 per cent. of its school budget—an average of £110,000 per school. Lancashire county council has much to do in releasing funds to its schools.

Mr. Pike: Why does the Minister not meet the head teachers of Lancashire schools, when he would find out that their real complaint is not about the county council's actions but about those of the Government in not providing sufficient funds to make local management schools work, in encouraging bureaucracy, and in making it difficult for head teachers to remain educationists? Is it not time the Government did more to ensure that teachers can get on with their real job of teaching?

Mr. Fallon: The teachers, governors and parents whom I meet are increasingly angry at the amount of money allocated to their schools being siphoned off by county hall. We are determined to do something about that.

Mr. Favell: Should not central administration in Lancashire and in nearby Stockport be largely contracted out?

Mr. Fallon: We believe that the schools themselves should decide on the support services that they need and the scale on which those services should be provided. Only by delegating budgets to schools can those decisions rest in the hands of head teachers and governors.

City Technology Colleges

8. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he next plans to visit the city technology college in Nottingham to discuss the funding of city technology colleges

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I hope to arrange a visit to the city technology college in Nottingham early in the new year, as soon as my diary commitments permit.

Mr. Allen: Is the Secretary of State aware that the amount of money spent on one city technology college in Nottingham is greater than the amount needed to repair all the other schools in Nottingham? Had that money been reallocated, it could have met the cost of building eight new schools in the Nottinghamshire area. As it is the right hon. and learned Gentleman's own education authority, will he do something about that problem and end the ridiculous and elitist CTC system?

Mr. Clarke: That money has provided an extremely well-equipped, brand new school in a depressed part of Nottingham inner city. The college is popular with parents and with those who teach there and it makes a valuable

addition to the city's education facilities. The money for it was not provided at the expense of other Nottinghamshire schools and the whole project will bring in £2 million of private sector investment in education which would not otherwise have been available to pupils in that city. Given the range of issues confronting Nottinghamshire's education authority, it is absurd for the hon. Gentleman to raise only the question of trying to close down or get rid of one of the city's finest new features.

Mr. Andy Stewart: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that before Nottingham city technology college was opened, the county council was asked whether there was scope for any closures and replied that there was not, yet immediately the college was opened the authority announced the closure of three schools when it could have sold one to the CTC and received £3 million to spend on other education provision?

Mr. Clarke: My hon. Friend and the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) both know as well as I do that Nottinghamshire county council has a long history of such actions, refusing to sell derelict flats for rebuilding, to sell old people's homes to private companies which would refurbish them, or to make premises available for the city technology college, preferring to lose money, incur expenditure, and make cuts in services—cuts which would otherwise be unnecessary. The county council's attitude to the CTC has been churlish from the beginning and flies totally in the face of the opinions of very many people in Nottingham.

Mr. Straw: Is the Secretary of State aware that when commenting on the withdrawal of support for a proposed city technology college in the Prime Minister's borough of Barnet—[HON. MEMBERS: "Not in Nottingham".]—Sir Cyril Taylor, the chairman of the CTC trust, said:

"It is madness to go on spending money on the original type of college"—

the original concept of the CTC—*[Interruption.]*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Let us get back to Nottingham.

Mr. Straw: When the Secretary of State goes to Nottingham—notwithstanding that the Minister described that as a misplaced leak, Sir Cyril Taylor has not denied the veracity of those words—will he agree that if it is madness as far as the chairman of the CTC trust is concerned, it ought to be madness as far as he is concerned?

Mr. Clarke: I am glad to say that nowadays the Labour party is totally outgunned in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire and the hon. Gentleman's intervention in our local controversies is not too welcome. We are on course for 15 city technology colleges, of which seven are already under way. If there is doubt about the future, it is caused in part by the Labour party's threat not to continue with the programme, a threat which has an obvious deterrent effect on sponsors. I invite the hon. Gentleman to come to Nottingham to visit the city technology college and to see for himself what a valuable addition it is to education facilities for children in Nottinghamshire.

LEA Capital Expenditure

9. **Ms. Walley:** To ask the Secretary of Education and Science when he expects to ann response to the bids from local education auth capital expenditure; and if he will make a state

Mr. Fallon: My right hon. and learned Frien to be able to announce the annual capital guid capital expenditure on education in 1991-92 education authorities shortly before the Christm

Ms. Walley: Does the announcement in Oct there would be extra money for education mean really will be extra money to spend on the buildings? Will the Minister give all parents th the country, and especially those in Stafford assurance that the quality of children's work will be affected by outside toilets, leaking roofs an homes which have long outlived their useful life

Mr. Fallon: The annual capital guidelines authority schools next year will be increased cent. above the guidelines for this year. A tota £472 million will be available. The criteria for ap under the guidelines are well known to local auth is up to the authorities to rank their projects in need.

Mr. Dunn: Does my hon. Friend agree that m authorities suffer from poor physical stock, larg the political motivations and actions of the O who starved local authorities that refuse comprehensive at the time of the last Labour Go Should not the Labour party take a large sha blame in the light of its responsibilities at that

Mr. Fallon: My hon. Friend, who knows a these matters, is certainly right in that respec capital guidelines have been increased substa next year over this year and it is open to local c top up the guidelines from receipts, from incor greater flexibility in the disposal of land.

Mr. Straw: Is the Secretary of State aware Majesty's inspectors reported that a third of chil learning in accommodation so substandard th badly affecting the quality of their education, th a £4 billion backlog of repairs has built up in t years and that it is a sign of the Gov complacency and neglect that in every yea Administration, including next year, less will b real terms on improving schools than in the last Labour Government?

Mr. Fallon: I am glad that the hon. Gentlema to do his homework for this question. The increa capital expenditure per pupil in maintained sc about 16 per cent. in real terms between 19 1988-89, and I have announced a substantial in next year.

A-level Examinations

10. **Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Secretary of Education and Science what recent representati received on the future of GCE A-level examin

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Some respondents to t Examinations and Assessment Council's co

exercise on draft principles to govern A and AS examinations have copied their views to me. I have also received some views directly.

Mr. Evennett: I thank my right hon. and learned Friend for his reply. We believe in high academic standards. Will he confirm that his aim is to maintain the high academic standard of the GCE A-level examinations that employers, universities and the professions require?

Mr. Clarke: I can certainly confirm that. Also, employers are looking to us to do something about those who ought to stay on after 16 but for whom A-levels are not suitable. The answer lies not in making A-levels easier for more people to pass, but in the arguments put by my hon. Friend the Minister of State. We must have other qualifications, including vocational qualifications, that are of high status and of a good standard and can exist as an alternative alongside A-levels.

Mr. Cousins: Will the Secretary of State ensure that the young men and women who are at present subjected to the narrow, stuffy and repetitive routines of A-level can feel the benefit of the much more open and lively courses that are going on, such as on the certificate of pre-vocational education? That has many young men and women in the west end of Newcastle in my constituency buzzing with commitment and enthusiasm. Will he please ensure that A-level students benefit from such activity?

Mr. Clarke: I share the hon. Gentleman's enthusiasm for the development of a better system of vocational qualifications. However, it is unnecessary to attack A-levels as he did because they are two separate things. People can take a mixture of both if they wish. It is getting hold of the wrong end of the stick to attack A-levels before going on to commend, sensibly, the development of better and more attractive vocational qualifications.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: In considering the future of A-levels, will my right hon. and learned Friend ensure that science subjects continue to be taught as individual subjects and examined individually? Does he agree that that is necessary if we are to continue the high academic standards in Britain?

Mr. Clarke: We have to ensure that science subjects can be taught separately to their present standards where the school and pupils want that and where it is suitable. If we are to have broader science teaching, it must be of the same quality as individual science subjects. Room must be kept in the curriculum and scope must be given to pupils to have separate science subjects if that is what they prefer.

Mr. Fatchett: At a time when university vice-chancellors, polytechnic directors, the Confederation of British Industry, all the teachers' organisations and the Government's Higginson report demand reform of A-levels, why do the Government still resist? Now that the Prime Minister has gone and the fear of her ideological commitment to A-levels is out of the way, why does not the Secretary of State announce that A-level reform is necessary and that we need an integrated modern system of post-16 education and training qualifications?

Mr. Clarke: I am all in favour of broadening the range of the curriculum and the education and training provided for people after the age of 16. The A-level part of that is not the problem. It serves its purpose extremely well for the moment in providing a route to our excellent three-year degree courses. The other part of the picture needs to be addressed first. It is no good putting attacks on A-levels at the top of the agenda when considering how best to improve opportunities for post-16 education.

School Buildings, Devon

11. **Mr. Steen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what capital allowances were made available to Devon county council in each of the last three years for replacing old school buildings with new ones.

Mr. Fallon: Devon received capital allocations of £8·434 million in 1988-89, £14·177 million in 1989-90 and an annual capital guideline of £12·984 million in 1990-91. It is up to Devon to decide how much to spend on replacing old school buildings out of all the capital resources available to it, of which the education annual capital guideline is only a part.

Mr. Steen: Does my hon. Friend the Minister agree that there is little point in funding half a dozen or so new buildings a year when 536 existing schools are not properly maintained under the Government's guidelines for the community charge? Would not it be better to allow Devon the discretion to decide whether to build half a dozen new buildings or to maintain some of the 536 buildings that are deteriorating rapidly?

Mr. Fallon: Devon has done relatively well, not just in the current year's allocation but in the allocation for the previous two years. The annual capital guideline for this year amounts to 45 per cent. of Devon's submitted plans, whereas the national average is only 35 per cent. It is for Devon to rank its priorities under our criteria and for my right hon. and learned Friend and me then to allocate the available sums. However, I shall reflect on my hon. Friend's point.

Mr. Allason: Will my hon. Friend bear in mind the large number of Victorian and other primary schools that were built in the last century in Devon? When the bids come in from Devon county council, will he bear in mind that very large number and give the bids his sympathetic consideration?

Mr. Fallon: My hon. Friend puts his case well at almost exactly the right time of year.

Nursery Education, Normanton

12. **Mr. O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what assistance he intends to offer to help nursery education in the Normanton constituency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: It is up to Leeds and Wakefield local education authorities to decide the resources that they wish to devote to nursery education within the hon. Gentleman's constituency.

Mr. O'Brien: Is the Minister aware of the effect of the standard spending assessment on nursery education in Wakefield, which forms part of my constituency? Is he further aware that the rate support grant cuts of the past 10 years, the dreaded poll tax and the lack of teacher training and of a proper wages structure are having an

effect on nursery provision in the Normanton constituency? When will the Minister stand up for nursery education and give children in families who are suffering from stress, because of unemployment and high mortgage and interest rates, the chance of early entry to the education system?

Mr. Eggar: Now, Sir. Seventy per cent. of three and four-year-olds attend nursery education in the Wakefield local education authority area. Indeed, 150,000 more children throughout the country now receive nursery education, compared with 1979. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I ask the House to listen, please, to Education questions in silence.

Education Vouchers

13. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what consideration he is giving to the use of education vouchers as a means of extending choice to parents.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We have no plans to introduce a voucher scheme for schools. We have already extended parental choice through our policies of ensuring that schools admit pupils up to the limit of the schools' physical capacity.

Mr. Evans: I thank my right hon. and learned Friend for his reply. I presume that he remains loyal to his beliefs when it comes to choice. Does he agree that had he remained loyal last Wednesday, Back Benchers would have had the freedom to choose the leader whom they wanted—the Prime Minister?

Mr. Speaker: Order. That has nothing to do with the question on the Order Paper.

Hon. Members: Answer.

Mr. Clarke: First, the Prime Minister and I and my hon. Friend are all agreed that the purpose of education policy is to extend parental choice and then to make sure that taxpayers' money follows that choice into the schools. We have achieved that aim in the policy of education reform on which we have embarked. It makes the need to introduce vouchers—once considered—redundant. I certainly voted for the Prime Minister last Tuesday when a large number of my colleagues did not. I have absolutely no doubt that whoever succeeds the Prime Minister will adhere to the policy of improving choice in schools, putting better resources into our schools, following parental choice and raising education standards.

Mr. Nellist: Of what benefit would education vouchers be to parents who face teacher shortages, particularly in London? Did the Secretary of State see last night's television report or read in this lunchtime's *Evening Standard* that 1,600 teachers in London have left schools in the past two months, which has affected the education of tens of thousands of pupils? Is not it a fact that it is not education vouchers but poor pay and low morale that are the real reason why parents, pupils and teachers get a rotten deal from the Government?

Mr. Clarke: There are particular problems in London, but we shall shortly be discussing teachers' pay when we debate the Bill that is on the Order Paper for today. During the debate I shall reveal that not so many people have entered initial teacher training for the fi the late 1970s. The vacancy level in our scho down sharply this autumn and the teacher w very low. Therefore, we are introducing the Bi still further the attractiveness of teaching as to get teachers of the quality that we require. the hon. Gentleman about one thing only: t have no relevance whatever to the import raising the morale of our teachers and gettin the quality that we need.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Will my right hon. Friend consider vouchers for nursery educ income and one-parent families experience finding kindergarten and nursery schools, b of choice could be achieved by a voucher sc

Mr. Clarke: I shall consider my h suggestion, with others made about nurse provision for the under-fives. We have ruled for statutory schooling between the ages of because of our excellent system of reform, w all the purposes for which vouchers were origi by the inventor of that notion.

Teacher Vacancies

14. **Mr. Haynes:** To ask the Secretary Education and Science what is his most rece teacher vacancies; and if he will make a stat

Mr. Fallon: My right hon. Friend the then State published on 5 October the res Department's survey of teacher vacancies con beginning of September, a copy of which is i On 3 September, local education authorities over 1,400 unfilled posts—very many fe vacancies reported in January. Those encouraging and show that our measures teacher recruitment and retention are being

Mr. Haynes: That is a terrible rec Government. I want to know whether every c a fully trained teacher. Come on, let us hav

Mr. Fallon *rose*——

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. There are four m before Prime Minister's Question Time.

Mr. Fallon: The hon. Gentleman's educat of Nottinghamshire had 138 vacancies last September, it had only five.

Mr. Harry Greenway: Will my hon. Fri constant attacks of the Labour party and its teaching profession and accept that teachers good as they have ever been and that they g service to our children, despite the Labour pa

Mr. Fallon: It is important that the L should cease to denigrate the profession. The is 1·8 per cent., which is one of the lo profession.

University Teachers (Morale)

15. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has had from university teachers about their current state of morale.

Mr. Alan Howarth: My right hon. Friend the then Secretary of State received from the Association of University Teachers a copy of its autumn 1990 publication, "Goodwill Under Stress". I met a delegation from the AUT on 20 November. We had a friendly and useful discussions about a range of issues. I pay tribute to the staff of the universities for the quality of tutorial and pastoral care that they give students in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Kirkwood: Does the Minister accept that the AUT document clearly shows that in the past 10 years university teachers have been overworked, undervalued and underpaid? Is not it highly significant that when Sir Edward Parkes, the chairman of the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals, was asked to comment on the resignation of the Prime Minister, he said that in the past 10 years too much of the energy of academic staff had been devoted to damage limitation? He further said that universities would regard the demise of the Thatcher years without regret.

Mr. Howarth: I know of no one who denigrates university teachers or who holds them in less than full respect. I very much hope that the hon. Gentleman does not disregard them. In the period during which my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has held office, there has been an increase of no less than 40 per cent. in the number of young people who have had the opportunity to participate in higher education. That is only one of the remarkable achievements under the inspired leadership of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister.

Mr. Dickens: Would not morale in the teaching profession be greatly improved if we identified weaknesses in teachers so that they could be given more training in that direction? Would not a good appraisal system produce those goods? We need to appraise teachers, weed out bad ones and help the good teachers more.

Mr. Howarth: As my hon. Friend knows, appraisal schemes are under active consideration by local education authorities all over the country and our policy is moving forward in that regard. Equally, higher education institutions are introducing their own appraisal systems. Of course, it is right that those who are performing outstanding work should have their performance recognised and that should be reflected in pay scales.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Haselhurst:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 27 November.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): Mr. Speaker—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] Mr. Speaker, this morning I had a number of meetings. After my duties in this House, I shall continue to reply to some of the 30,000 letters that have so far been delivered to Downing street in the past few days.

Mr. Haselhurst: If this is to be the last occasion on which my right hon. Friend answers questions from the Dispatch Box, may I express the appreciation of Conservative Members—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."]—and, I hope, of the whole House, for the skill, command and courtesy with which she has dealt with questions over the past 11 years?

Is my right hon. Friend aware that Stansted airport's new terminal is to open in March next year, that the main roads serving it will not be available until 1995 and that the rail links serving it will not be of adequate capacity until that same year? Does my right hon. Friend agree that, if we are to get more public acceptance among communities that have major developments thrust upon them, it would be better if essential infrastructure came sooner rather than later?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his kind words. Stansted airport is close to the M11. I understand that the British Airways Authority is building a dual carriageway to connect the new terminal to the M11 and that it should be ready by March next year. I understand that British Rail is building a track to connect the terminal to the Liverpool Street station line and has already ordered rolling stock. That, too, should be ready by March next year. I hope that that will satisfy the last question by my hon. Friend that I shall answer.

Mr. Kinnock: Would the Prime Minister be good enough to tell us which of the policies that she leaves to her successor she now thinks should be scrapped?

The Prime Minister: I am happy that my successor will carry on the excellent policies that have finished with the decline of socialism, brought great prosperity to this country, raised Britain's standing in the world and brought about a truly capital-owning democracy.

Mr. Kinnock: If the Prime Minister thinks that nothing should be changed, can she tell us why on earth all those now competing for her job are desperately wriggling around trying to find a way out of the poll tax trap?

The Prime Minister: On the contrary, I really rather thought that they were keeping the poll—the community charge—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."]—the community charge or community policy and, whatever review they have, the result will be infinitely better than going back to the rates, which of course would be the worst of all worlds.

Mr. Kinnock: As this may conceivably be the last time that the Prime Minister answers, may I say to her that her honest approach to the poll tax is commendable? She is demonstrating that there are two, and only two, honest approaches: one is to keep the poll tax intact, as she wants, and the other is to abolish it entirely, as we shall do.

The Prime Minister: No, that is not correct. As with any new tax, one always both reviews it and continually amends it. I should have thought that the right hon. Gentleman would know that after all this time.

Dame Jill Knight: May I voice the profound regret felt by millions in this country, and thousands of millions outside, that my right hon. Friend is not to continue in her high office? Is she aware of their acknowledgement of her

unrivalled service in turning back the tide of socialism, ending the brutal tyranny of the militants in the trade unions and re-establishing Britain as a great power? Finally, may I ask my right hon. Friend to reflect——

Hon. Members: Too long.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Lady is coming to an end.

Dame Jill Knight: Finally, may I ask my right hon. Friend to reflect with pride that a thousand years from now, when every other Member of the House is dead dust, she alone will have a hallowed place in the history books?

The Prime Minister: I am very grateful to my hon. Friend for her generous tributes I am certain that the Conservative constructive policies will continue, and that they will lead to a fourth election victory.

Mr. Molyneaux: Does the Prime Minister recall an important debate in November 1985, when relations between us were a little strained? Does she recall my addressing her thus:

"Millions of our fellow British citizens throughout this nation feel that the Prime Minister has a lasting contribution to make to the destiny of the nation."?—[*Official Report*, 26 November 1985; Vol. 87, c. 768.]

Is the Prime Minister now aware that the vast majority of those people wish that contribution to continue?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman is very generous indeed. I think that it will continue from the Back Benches, as it has from the Front Bench.

Mrs. Maureen Hicks: Is my right hon. Friend aware that it was as a result of her unique vision at the helm that the voters in my constituency, after 40 years, rejected Labour—in her words, rejecting "windy rhetoric" from the Leader of the Opposition—because they saw in her unique qualities of leadership? May I please take this opportunity—on behalf of my constituents, who feel a tremendous sense of loss—to convey my sincere best wishes, and to extend a very warm invitation to Denis and herself to come and see us in Wolverhampton any time?

The Prime Minister: I thank my hon. Friend very much. I think that our policies since 1979 have built a new opportunity Britain, which can hold its head high in the world of international affairs. I am sure that those policies will continue, and we shall all pull together to ensure that they do.

Mr. Speaker: I call Mrs. Rosie Barnes.—*[Interruption.]*

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: All right, all right, all right.

Mr. Cryer: Can't you read?

Mr. Speaker: That is very impertinent of the hon. Gentleman.

I should have called Mrs. Mahon first.

Q2. **Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 27 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Lady to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mrs. Mahon: Does the Prime Minister agree with her right hon. Friend the Member for Circencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Ridley), who said i Thursday that her forced resignation about by an act of treachery by some

The Prime Minister: I have resigned a be a successor. I wish him well. I am continue the policies that have been Britain and that he will continue to de

Mr. Donald Thompson: Will my right very soon to Calder Valley, where industrious, prosperous and happy people there will say to her what they weekend—"She's been a good 'un."

The Prime Minister: I think that, af to Calder Valley and I shall look forw

Q4. **Mrs. Rosie Barnes:** To ask the she will list her official engagements November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. that I gave some moments ago.

Mrs. Barnes: May I pay a warm tr Minister for her courage and dignity days? Given that the leadership of the decided by a third ballot and by u transferable second preference votes, Minister reconsider the merits of that s elections?

The Prime Minister: I am sure that understand that I am all for first past

Q5. **Mr. Wilshire:** To ask the Prime list her official engagements for Tuesd

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Wilshire: As this may be one questions from a Conservative Membe Friend, may I take the opportunity to a knows how many questions she has capacity as Prime Minister. Will she thanks of all her many friends insid House, and especially of all her friends of Spelthorne? May I express to her good wish for the future, and God bl

The Prime Minister: First, this will Time at which I shall answer; I do no a career of positively last appearance Friend for his kind words, especiall husband, and I also thank him for givi question as I might not otherwise have His question is the 7,498th oral questi replied in 698 Question Times.

Q6. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Prime list her official engagements for Tuesd

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Winnick: Does not the Prime M nauseating and hypocritical to be——

Hon. Members: You are.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Come along.

Mr. Winnick: Does not the Prime Minister find it the height of hypocrisy and nauseating to be so highly praised by Tory Members when, last week, 152 of them stabbed her in the back?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman was not exactly complimentary on my last appearance, was he? I do not find it nauseating; I find it very refreshing.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: Will my right hon. Friend, while she is still Prime Minister, write and leave signed by her a minute of the proceedings of the Heads of Government within the European Economic Community so that her successor can endeavour to protect Britain's long-term interests in the valiant and effective manner in which she has always done?

The Prime Minister: I can assure my hon. Friend that all the proceedings are well minuted and documented, and I most earnestly hope that the traditions of this House, which is the oldest democratic Parliament in the Community, will be fully upheld, because they ensure accountability to the people.

Q7. **Mr. Strang:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 27 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Strang: When the Prime Minister recalls the day when she quoted St. Francis of Assisi on the steps of Downing street, will she contemplate the increase in family poverty that resulted from her repeated refusal to increase child benefit? Will she recall the increased hardship that resulted from the 1988 social security changes? Will she think about the homeless, whose numbers have doubled since she came to power? Is she aware that Opposition Members represent communities some of which have not recovered from the unprecedented rates of unemp ment that she inflicted on them in the early 1980s? T are some of the reasons why she will go down in histor the Prime Minister who rewarded the rich and puni the poor.

The Prime Minister: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman also recall that Scotland is enjoying greater prosperity t it has ever known under any previous Government; there are now 2 million more jobs than there were wh took over; and that, remembering the situation wh took office in 1979, there is much more peace in the industry now than there was then. We have much m peace in the coal industry, and we fought off some of most difficult and vicious attacks, during the coal st that this country has ever seen. He should also recall we have had the lowest number of strikes this year in whole post-war period.

BILL PRESENTED

Severn Bridges

Mr. Secretary Parkinson, supported by Mr. Secre Waddington, Mr. Secretary Wakeham, Mr. Secre Patten, Mr. John Selwyn Gummer, Mr. Norman Lam Mr. Secretary Hunt, Mr. Secretary Lilley and Mr. R Freeman, presented a Bill to provide for the construc of a new bridge over the Severn Estuary between Engl and Wales and roads leading to the new bridge associated works; to make provision for the levying of in respect of use of the existing Severn bridge and the bridge; to make other provision for and in connection the operation of the bridges; and for connected purpo And the same was read the First time; and ordered t read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed. [Bill

Orders of the Day

School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

3.31 pm

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, of which I have given you notice. This Bill was published a political lifetime ago, on 15 November. Since then, the Prime Minister has resigned and each of the candidates for the Conservative party leadership has announced policies, including the central funding of teachers' pay, that are wholly inconsistent with the scheme of this Bill.

Is it in the interests of the good administration of Bills in this House for the House to proceed with this Bill when there is no guarantee that the policies contained in it will not be overturned by a new Administration?

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North): Further to that point of order——

Mr. Speaker: Order. it is not a point of order at all —*[Interruption.]* It is very much a point of argument. I must tell the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) that he has tabled a reasoned amendment to the Bill. Had he wanted to do so, he could have put down an amendment in the terms of the argument that he has advanced—but his point of order to me now is not a point of order at all.

Mr. Allen: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. The Leader of the House is with us. Can he be prevailed upon to make a brief statement, given that none of the potential Prime Ministers will support the provisions of the Bill and that in four hours' time——

Mr. Speaker: Order. All these are matters of argument which can be advanced during the debate. They are not points of order for me.

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): Further to that point of order——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I hope that it is not the same one.

Mr. Taylor: On a different point related to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. There is an amendment on the Order Paper in the terms that have just been discussed. Will it be possible for the House to vote on the amendment tabled in the name of my right hon. Friend the Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) and his hon. Friends?

Mr. Speaker: I have selected one amendment, in the name of the leader of the Opposition—I have not yet had an opportunity to say that—but I cannot select two. I have not selected the amendment in the name of the Liberal Democrats.

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Has it not been nice to read the Prime Minister's obituary while she is still alive?

Mr. Speaker: Can I have a real point of order, please?

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): On a real point of order, Mr. Speaker. Have you observed that, in this week's business, two days are devoted to an entirely non-controversial Bill which affects Wales and that there will be further consideration of the Statutory Sick Pay Bill which both sides of the House had difficulty in finding speakers to speak to last night? Because of the light load of this week's business, will you give further reconsideration to your decision yesterday on the bid by my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) for a debate on the all-important, crucial issue of the Gulf war?

Mr. Speaker: That is hypothetical at the moment. I give consideration to important matters every day.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I call Mr. Flannery although I think we should get on with the debate.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) is seeking to speak in the debate, so I will hear his point of order.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): My hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) raised a point of order about the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Bill, and I want to raise a completely different point of order about it. This Bill has been condemned as a violation of international law with regard to the teaching profession by the International Labour Organisation of the United Nations. During the debate, it will emerge that the Bill is not lawful in accord with international law and it is time——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Those are matters which the hon. Gentleman can rightly advance during the debate. If it is of any comfort to him, I propose to call him very early.

Mr. Flannery: Sir, I will shut up immediately.

Ms. Dawn Primarolo (Bristol, South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday, in reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) and his application under Standing Order No. 20, you said in column 620——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That was yesterday.

Ms. Primarolo: In replying to my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow about this very important debate about the possibility of war in the Gulf, Mr. Speaker, you said:

"I cannot therefore today submit his application to the House."—[*Official Report*, 26 November 1990; Vol. 181, c. 620.]

Can you indicate whether the Foreign Secretary intends to make an emergency statement to the House before the United Nations meets on Thursday about the likelihood of war in the Gulf?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Lady correctly quotes me from *Hansard*. I certainly said that. However, I have not had an application today under Standing Order No. 20 on that matter, and I have no knowledge of whether the Government propose to make a statement about it. I hope perhaps they may.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. The Opposition are amazed that the Foreign Secretary is not offering to make a statement, given that the five permanent members of the Security

Council are to set a date for war. Surely it is more important to talk about that than for the Foreign Secretary to worry about a career as Prime Minister.

Mr. Speaker: That is not a matter for me. We will get on with the debate. I must announce to the House that I have selected the reasoned amendment in the name of the Leader of the Opposition.

3.38 pm

The Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second Time.

The Bill contains the agreed policy of this Government. I can certainly speak for two of the candidates for the position of Prime Minister who are committed to the Bill, and I believe that I know the third candidate well enough and have followed his proposals rather more carefully to know that he will endorse it and will probably vote for the Bill's provisions this evening.

The Bill comes before the House in a very different climate from that which surrounded the Teachers' Pay and Conditions Act 1987, which it is intended to replace. The House will recall that, before the 1987 Act, there was a history of progressive breakdown in the so-called Burnham machinery and increasing disruption and bitterness in our schools, which had come to a very bad head shortly before the Bill.

Since we passed the 1987 Act, there have been four years of industrial peace in our schools, and a succession of fair settlements for teachers on the basis of the excellent and well received reports produced by the interim advisory committee have served teachers well. That committee has clearly demonstrated its independence and fitness for the job. As a result, over the past few years teachers have had a clear framework for pay, duties and working time. Employers and governing bodies have been able to reward good performance and the acceptance of responsibility. That has coincided with the Government's education reforms, which are giving a much clearer focus and direction to the work of teaching.

If one looks back to 1987, one can see that the result has been four years of achievement in our schools and real improvements in the way in which children are being educated. I recognise the amount of hard work that the teachers, whose pay is the subject of the Bill, have put into what is happening in schools today. I applaud the professionalism of teachers and the achievements of the teaching profession. I believe that teachers' status is well on the way to recovery from the damage done to it during that unfortunate period in the mid-1980s. As we proceed to implement our reforms, parents will gain a greater understanding of what teachers are trying to do and regain their trust in teachers' professional commitment to the education of their children.

The 1987 Act was always recognised as a short-term solution to immediate and pressing problems. As I have said, it has fulfilled its purpose admirably, but it is time now to put more permanent arrangements into place. That is what this Bill is designed to do. It gives effect to the decisions which my predecessor, now sitting beside me in his capacity as Leader of the House, announced in the House on 23 July when he was Secretary of State for Education and Science.

The decisions that my right hon. Friend and the Government took followed prolonged and careful consultations with all the interested parties. I am afraid that it was always clear that it would not be easy to reach agreement on difficulty and sensitive issues on which widely differing views were held. Nobody regretted the demise of the Burnham committee, which was soon behind us, but it was difficult to achieve consensus on what should follow. Different and incompatible views were expressed during the consultations—most favouring the restoration of negotiating rights for teachers, while others preferred some kind of independent review. It became clear that it was not possible to find an acceptable solution which commanded universal agreement. The Government's decision has been to restore teachers' negotiating rights. That has been welcomed by the employers and most of the major teacher unions.

The main features of the new machinery which the Bill will establish are very different from the ill-fated Burnham machinery. First, the Bill provides for direct national negotiations between employers and unions. There will be a separate sub-committee for heads and deputies. The Bill brings together in one negotiating forum both pay and conditions. It has a deadline for the completion of negotiations and provides a clear means of resolving deadlock. It also provides reserve powers for the Government to refer back to the negotiating body, with reasons, any aspect of agreed settlements with which they are unhappy and, in the last resort, to impose their own views.

The Bill also provides for reference of matters to an advisory committee if the negotiating body fails to reach agreement by the deadline and for individual local education authorities and grant-maintained schools to opt out of the national arrangements and determine the pay and conditions of their teachers locally. That is the Bill's outline, and I shall deal with each feature, but first I give way to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): I am grateful to my right hon. and learned Friend—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Greenway: All teachers are crucial, but heads and deputies are centrally crucial in schools. Therefore, will my right hon. and learned Friend consider the worries of heads and deputies that their sub-committee on pay and conditions is to report to the main committee and, presumably, will be subject to overruling by it? Can my right hon. and learned Friend reassure me that safeguards exist to ensure that the sub-committee will not be overruled, save in the most serious circumstances?

Mr. Clarke: The Bill provides just such safeguards—it is not possible for the main committee so to override the sub-committee's recommendations that it makes it impossible for the Secretary of State to allow the head teachers and deputies to have what they want. I assure my hon. Friend that the Bill provides for the problem that he fears might otherwise arise.

The Bill's first clause, together with schedule 1, provides for the establishment of the new national negotiating committee and a separate sub-committee to take the initiative on matters involving heads and deputies. It also distinguishes between the statutory and non-statutory conditions of employment: it is only the former, the statutory conditions—pay, duties and teachers' working time—that will be dealt with under the procedures set out

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in the rest of the Bill. On other matters, the committee will be able to strike such agreements as it wishes, subject only to a requirement in clause 6 to notify me of what it has agreed.

Clause 2 is concerned with how negotiations get started, what the negotiating deadline will be, and what recommendations can be made as a result of different negotiations. Clause 3 and schedule 2 establish the procedures to be followed when negotiations result in recommendations, and clause 4 establishes what should happen if there are no recommendations by the relevant deadline.

I should say a little more about these provisions. First, negotiations—the initiative for negotiations will rest with the committees, not with the Secretary of State. The committees will be able to give themselves as long as they like to negotiate, the only constraint being that they must finish on time because teachers' negotiations have a history of being far too protracted. There will be no constraints on the negotiations and, in particular, no pre-set financial limits. The main aim of the negotiations will be a return to normal working, and it will be for the local authority employers to decide what they can afford and to reflect that in their negotiations.

Secondly, I referred briefly to the Government's powers to refer back and to override. I hope that we will not hear sanctimonious humbug about this because the need for the Government to have such powers is perfectly obvious and has always been accepted. Since 1944, Governments of all parties have been able to influence teachers' pay structure and contain pay costs. Only a particularly irresponsible Labour Government would not feel obliged to exercise an influence on teachers' pay structure and the total pay bill.

I should like to quote from one of my distinguished predecessors. During the passage of the Remuneration of Teachers Act 1965, the late Lord Stewart of Fulham, then Michael Stewart, the Secretary of State for Education and Science said:

> "I doubt whether any Government in any set of circumstances could put itself in a position where it could hand over the power on the global sum to someone other than itself."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee B*, 1 December 1964; c. 20.]

From 1965, the Government's interests were secured by a concordat that operated alongside the legal provisions of the 1965 Act. I shall not go back over the full 20 years——

Mr. Straw: Why not? We have lots of time.

Mr. Clarke: I suspect that the number of hon. Members who will wish to speak in the debate will be smaller than might have been the case on another day.

As I say I shall not go back over the full 20 years, but most people are agreed that the concordat worked reasonably satisfactorily. It provided the Government with a weighted vote inside the management panel and a veto over proposed offers on grounds of total cost. That veto was conceded by the local authority employers and was not backed by any statutory provision. In 1985, the employers' side, the local authority side, then led by the Labour party, unilaterally scrapped the concordat, leaving the Government with a much diminished and quite inadequate influence on the outcome of the negotiations. That could not be tolerated by any Government.

The Government provide about two thirds of th money that is necessary to pay the teachers as a result o any settlement. There is room for argument, and I am sur that there will be much debate in Committee about th precise form of negotiations, but all negotiations mus have reflected on one side of the table the legitimat interests of employees, and on the other side the legitimat interests of the employers and those who will be calle upon to finance them.

Negotiations are between the recipients of finance an those who provide that finance. It would be quite absur to devise a system whereby the local authority employe who provide the minority of the money for the settlemer could reach whatever settlement they pleased without th Government, who have to use taxpayers' money and th business rate to provide the bulk of the finance, having an say and influence. In the consultations that proceeded m right hon. Friend's statement to the House in July, bot employers and trade unions agreed that the Governmer must be able to have the last word on affordability in an new permanent machinery. The Bill therefore gives th Government a sensible and necessary role in determinin teachers' statutory conditions of employment.

Mr. Straw: As will emerge in greater detail in m speech, I broadly accept what the Secretary of State h said about the Government's position. However, may press him on the accountability of the Government an Ministers to Parliament, because one important defect this Bill, as compared even with the Teachers Pay an Conditions Act 1987, is that decisions which the Secreta of State may make under his reserved powers under th Bill can be checked by this House only under the negati resolution procedure even when those decisions a contrary to the recommendations of the teachers' pa committee, whereas decisions under the 1987 Act had to subject to the affirmative resolution procedure, which w beneficial, certainly for accountability?

Mr. Clarke: I shall look at that point again, but the are precedents for the negative resolution procedure, as s out in the Bill. My right hon. and learned Friend the Hon Secretary has similar override powers in respect of certa pay settlements, which are also covered by negati resolution. If the Government were in conflict with t negotiated solution that they were overriding, a Pray would be tabled, which the House would expect to deba In practice, however, that is unlikely to be a matter of gre significance to the House.

One snag with using the positive procedure is that t House of Lords would also have a vote and there are tho with reservations about whether their Lordships shou have the power to take decisions involving large sums public expenditure. I cannot believe that this House wou lose the opportunity of having a vote on the expenditu and on the Secretary of State's use of the override teachers' pay settlements. There would be adequa opportunities for the House to have such a vote under t negative resolution procedure.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: We are given to understand th where the settlements are within the inter-quartile ran they will not normally be referred back on the basis of t cost of the settlement. Why is it only "normally"? Sur that provision in itself would allow the Secretary of St

to say that, for financial reasons, the Government would never refer back a settlement that was within the inter-quartile range, where it has been agreed.

Mr. Clarke: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for referring to the undertaking that was given by my predecessor. The Government do not intend to act unfairly or arbitrarily.

Before turning to the basis on which the Government would not normally seek to exercise the override, I should first explain that the Bill provides some statutory procedures that would stop any Secretary of State of any Government behaving in an unfair or arbitrary fashion. Where the Secretary of State is unhappy with what has been proposed, he does not immediately move and refer that matter to the advisory committee. The Secretary of State's first step would be to refer that matter back to the negotiators for their reconsideration, stating his reasons for asking them to look at it again. Only if that process has been exhausted, if the two sides are still at loggerheads and differences remain, would the question of overriding the negotiators' recommendations arise.

When it comes to exercising those powers as a member of the Government, my predecessor gave the undertaking to which the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) has just referred, which is that normally the Government would not intend to refer back recommendations on cost grounds if the overall cost was within the inter-quartile range of the private sector settlements for non-manual employees. That does not mean that we will always refer back settlements that fall outside that range, but we shall expect the negotiators to justify them and to explain how they intend to afford the settlements without having adverse effects on other schools' expenditure if such settlements are reached. That means that teachers can be confident of fair treatment compared with the work force in general, and that they will have scope to improve their pay relative to others over time. The inter-quartile range is also the range that we have chosen for civil service pay, and it has greatly improved the arrangements for civil servants.

Having got to that point, the hon. Member for Truro may ask why we do not make the provisions absolutely clear. He may even want to put them on the face of the Bill. The Government will remain bound by the undertaking that was given by my right hon. Friend the former Secretary of State for Education and Science, and which has been repeated by me today on behalf of the Government. The only reason for not making that undertaking statutory is that if, in future—perhaps by general consent—the Government were to give a different guideline which gave flexibility, it would be a pity if that required primary legislation.

The teaching profession may welcome the possibility of seeing what happens in the next few years, given the Government's commitment that we shall not normally interfere with settlements that fall within the inter-quartile range. The House should not make it too difficult for a Secretary of State to suggest a different Government guideline. Our policy is one that I think the hon. Gentleman would want, and we would not usually interfere provided that a settlement was within the inter-quartile range.

The Government's objectives for teachers' pay have been stated clearly on many occasions, and I am glad to repeat them today. We want teachers' pay to be sufficient to recruit, retain and motivate enough teachers of the right quality within what can reasonably be afforded. Having set down that principle, it is important that the pay arrangements should contain sufficient flexibility. I want there to be many well-paid, successful, professional teachers, but it is right that the money and any improved payments should go where they are needed most. Pay and negotiations should be used by employers, in this case influenced by the Government, in ways that serve managerial purposes and, in this service, that above all serve educational purposes.

Money should be used especially to reward excellence in performance, to recognise responsibility and to tackle recruitment problems. I and the Government would prefer the large sums of money involved in teachers' pay settlements to be used in that way rather than in the undifferentiated way of agreeing on one settlement figure for the profession as a whole.

Mr. Ronnie Campbell (Blyth Valley): Last weekend, I visited the South Beach first school in my constituency. I was given a copy of an assessment form covering science, English and arithmetic. The chart must be filled in because of the new assessment procedure. It takes a school teacher at least three quarters of an hour to do that for each child, and there are at least 30 pupils in each class. It is obvious that teachers cannot both be filling in forms and teaching their pupils, so they must take the forms home. Will the Government pay teachers extra money for taking home that work? I shall give the Minister the assessment form, as he may like to look at it.

Mr. Clarke: I thank the hon. Gentleman for handing me the assessment form for levels one and two used by South Beach school. I shall put myself to the test later and I hope that I can reach the necessary attainment level. However, the form was not created by the Government. South Beach school is under no legal obligation to use such a form and it is not part of the present reforms. I have not seen such a form previously, but it is possible that it relates to some earlier pilot projects on the tests that we propose to introduce in schools. The testing system for seven, 11, 14 and 16-year-olds is not yet legally in force, and it certainly will not follow the format of the hon. Gentleman's assessment form. We are contemplating a very much simpler form for seven-year-old tests. Of course, I am interested to know that an assessment form is being used sensibly, but I am sure that the Government can devise a simpler one.

It is important to have an assessment system for pupils and also to ensure that it is set out in a way that can be readily understood by parents. That is our aim. I think that most teachers accept that assessment of pupils and reporting the results to parents are an ordinary part of a teacher's occupation. Most teachers will welcome the framework that we will provide for them to do that. We held pilot projects in English schools last July on a particular method of testing seven-year-olds. A number of its features were not satisfactory and we have withdrawn that proposal. We are now working on what will be the statutory procedures for testing the English, maths and basic scientific knowledge of seven-year-olds in the summer of next year.

As I said, I believe that teachers' pay should be used to reward excellence of performance, to attract particular skills, and to be flexible in other ways. If negotiations fail to reach a conclusion on either that or any other basis

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when the deadline is reached, the Bill provides for what will then happen. It would be unsatisfactory if a deadlock were reached in the main annual negotiations and teachers were then left for a year without a settlement.

Clause 4 provides for the Secretary of State automatically to seek recommendations from the advisory committee to be established under clause 5 and schedule 3. I make no apology for the fact that that committee is closely modelled on the interim advisory committee. It has operated successfully over the past three years, and it has earned general respect for its independence and the quality of its reports. It will not provide arbitration, but will work to a clear Government remit. However, I stress that that body will only come into play where negotiations end in disagreement. It is plainly necessary that, if the parties to the new negotiations fail to agree, the Secretary of State must look to other means of resolving them.

Mr. Derek Fatchett (Leeds, Central): Over the weekend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer seemed to commit himself to a review of teachers' pay. If one takes place, how does the Secretary of State envisage that it will fit into the appropriate machinery? Would such a review be the responsibility of the interim advisory committee or of a separate, ad hoc committee? Will it supplement negotiations, and has the right hon. and learned Gentleman discussed that idea with the Chancellor?

Mr. Clarke: As an elector in the leadership contest, I am following the statements of the three candidates with interest. I do not believe that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor has committed himself, as a putative Prime Minister, to a review of teachers' pay. However, the hon. Gentleman will find that all three contenders for the premiership are united in a desire to see the status of teachers restored to the level of a few years ago. We all want to see their self-esteem restored, and have in place proper provisions for negotiating sensible pay arrangements.

My right hon. Friend the Chancellor has expressed his concerns about the status of teachers in this country, and I share his views. However, I do not believe that we shall embark on a fresh review of pay arrangements, when the Bill contains excellent arrangements that should be enacted and put into force.

Mr. Fatchett: The Chancellor was talking not about detailed arrangements and machinery but of improving teachers' salaries and conditions. If the right hon. Member for Huntingdon (Mr. Major) came along in the new capacity of Prime Minister, would the Secretary of State agree to a new review of pay and conditions? Would he think that was a worthwhile step forward?

Mr. Clarke: So far, at this late stage in the contest, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor has not committed himself to any specific enhancements in teachers' pay and conditions. Like me, my right hon. Friend has served as a member of a Government who have seen a steady improvement in pay and conditions. Teachers are on average 30 per cent. better off in real terms—that is, their spending power has increased by 30 per cent. over the past 10 years. Today's teachers are much better off than previous generations.

We are devising machinery—my right hon. Friend Chancellor and I will vote for it this evening—th designed to pave the way for negotiations, which wi doubt continue to be funded in such a way that teac pay will certainly keep in line with movements elsew We have said that we will not interfere if the settlen are within the inter-quartile range. In that way, teac pay will keep in step with that of other professions might even improve by comparison with them. Pe those of my right hon. and hon. Friends who are closely allied with my right hon. Friend the Chan than I am at this time in the leadership contest, and are present in the Chamber, know otherwise—but I d believe that he has committed a Government unde leadership to a specific review of teachers' pay conditions—*[Interruption.]* I believe that authorit comments are being offered from the Benches behin

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): Does my hon. and learned Friend agree that, such has bee improvement in teachers' pay, the hon. Membe Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) might be e back into the profession?

Mr. Clarke: Many right hon. and hon. Members want the hon. Gentleman to return to his fo profession, but I am not sure that would be in line wi Government's policy of enhancing standards in schools. In case that remark is taken literally outs would not dream of traducing the hon. Gentle professional status as a teacher. However, there are when I wish that he were back in the classroom.

Mr. Gerry Steinberg (City of Birmingham): Secretary of State claims that teachers are 30 per better off in real terms than they have ever been. Hov he explain the fact that, in the four years since the in advisory committee has been in operation, teacher has not even kept up with inflation?

Mr. Clarke: It may not have done so every year, has over the whole four years. The IAC was establish the back of a very large settlement. It is true thereafter, the settlement did not keep in line with inf every year. That is no answer to the basic point that I —the intervention by the hon. Member for C Durham (Mr. Steinberg) is no answer to that, ei which was that, during the period that the Gover have been in office, they have shown that they rec the need for the real income of teachers to rise in lin the improved prosperity of the country. Today's te have 30 per cent. more purchasing power than they h years ago, when the Conservative Government ca power.

This is a good day for talking about the achieve of the past 11 years. Teachers who have been profession throughout the 11 years of my right Friend's premiership will find that they are much be today than they were when she came to office.

Mr. Alistair Burt (Bury, North): Could my righ and learned Friend remind the House—Oppo Members sometimes seem to be suffering from col amnesia—that teachers' pay rose by 6 per cent during their term of office? I wonder why they se forget that, when they put so many questions to him teachers' pay?

Mr. Clarke: That is certainly the case. It is an irony that, under the last Labour Government, the pay of white collar workers, those in the professions and in the public services hardly improved at all. Blue collar industrial workers appeared to do much better than them but, in the end, no one thrived—especially in the face of the inflation over which the last Labour Government presided.

For a long time, our record on teachers' pay has been much better than that of the Government from which we took over. That record gives credibility to the Bill.

Mr. Steinberg *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: Hon. Members are encouraging me to give way because we have a lot of time. I shall give way once more, and then we shall have a change of subject.

Mr. Steinberg: I appreciate the fact that the right hon. and learned Gentleman is giving way. Rather than teachers being 30 per cent. better off in real terms, since 1974 and the Houghton award, teachers are 40 per cent. worse off. So the right hon. Gentleman's figures are not accurate. In the past 16 years, teachers have generally had a bad deal, and they are now a lot worse off than they ever were.

Mr. Clarke: Houghton was one of those sudden peaks. Thereafter, teachers' pay sharply declined.

Mr. Steinberg: No.

Mr. Clarke: Yes, it was. The then Labour Government, implemented Houghton to win an election, and thereafter, teachers' pay dropped away. Returning to the present, I believe that the hon. Gentleman is wrong. I shall check, but it is my belief that, in real terms, teachers' incomes today are higher than they were at the time of the Houghton report recommendations.

Mr. Steinberg *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Member for City of Durham shakes his head. No doubt, if I am wrong, my hon. Friend will be able to correct me when he replies to the debate.

Mr. Harry Greenway: Speaking as one who received the Houghton award of 34 per cent. in 1974, I think that the House should remember that there was 27 per cent. inflation a year later—[HON. MEMBERS: "There was not."] Yes—in 1976, there was. The value of Houghton's award was totally eroded by 1979. When the Labour Government left office, we were worse off than when we were paid the Houghton award.

Mr. Clarke: We are reminiscing. I fought the 1974 election. The then Labour party bought the teachers by promising to implement Houghton, and bought nurses by promising to implement Halsbury. Once they got into office, the value of those awards in real terms was allowed to erode almost immediately.

The Bill is a much more sensible way to proceed. I am advised that, in the opinion of those who advise me, I was correct in our recent exchanges. Teachers are now 12 per cent. better off in real terms than they were after the Houghton settlement.

Let us return to the new arrangements. Clause 7 of the Bill provides for the making of orders to give effect to the changes in teachers' pay, duties and working time which emerge from the various processes that I was describing a few moments ago.

Clauses 8 and 9 provide for local education authorities and governing bodies of grant-maintained schools—who judged that they could respond better to local needs and circumstances by themselves settling the pay and conditions of their teachers—to apply to be allowed to opt out of the nationally determined framework. That builds upon the local flexibility which we have already achieved in the national arrangements in the past three years, and in my opinion is a natural extension of it.

I strongly approve of the development of more local pay bargaining and more local settlements on terms and conditions in the great public services. It would be especially advantageous for the teaching profession, many local education authorities and many grant-maintained schools.

I do not envisage that huge variations from national rates will be introduced rapidly, or at all in many cases, but the ability to tackle particular problems of local recruitment, to recognise particular skills that a school needs to offer, to reward particular performance, and to enter into agreements between the school and its staff, or the local education authority and its staff, about changes that staff want and agree to deliver in their part of the service, should all be permitted. I believe firmly that, steadily over the years, more and more local education authorities and schools and those who represent the teachers in those authorities and schools will see the advantages of moving out of national negotiating machinery and towards local pay bargaining.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: On the basis of his comments, will the Secretary of State clarify whether he believes that it is preferable for most local authorities and schools to opt out of the national arrangements that he has been describing? Is it his desire that most should opt out? Can he elaborate a little on whether any research has been undertaken within the Department to assess the likely impact of such opting out? He has suggested that the impact might not be very great. What research has taken place, and will it be presented to the House.?

Mr. Clarke: As a matter of broad principle but not immediate policy, I would welcome it if the majority of local education authorities and grant-maintained schools were operating some degree of local pay bargaining. That is not an imminent possibility, and it might be undesirable to move to that quite so quickly. When local pay bargaining begins to be developed within a giant service that is accustomed to only national pay bargaining, it is wise for all parties to proceed cautiously. People become accustomed to their pay, terms and conditions being handed down from on high by the Burnham committee or, in this case, its successor, and the skills do not always exist locally to move straight to local pay bargaining. It is not as easy as it sounds or looks to start negotiating as a county with all the staff outside the national limits, or for a grant-maintained school to start negotiating with its staff.

There is scope for some research and for people to develop the skills they require. I believe that, as the opportunity is provided by the Bill for employers to leave the national negotiating arrangements, some will take advantage of it. People will get used to the new arrangements and I should like to see it become much more the norm inside the education service. As I have said,

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people should move slowly, because negotiations at local level are difficult when nobody locally has experience of pay bargaining.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: I agree with the Secretary of State about the need to move slowly. He said that there is scope for some research. I asked what research the Department has undertaken into the likely impact of opting out. We have not seen any. If there has been research, will it be made available to hon. Members during the debates on the Bill?

Mr. Clarke: I do not think that we have had any and, without prejudging it, I do not think that I would take much notice of it if we had. Hypothetical research about the impact of local pay bargaining in a service that has not had any is not, in my experience, very valuable. The main thing is not to have research into what might happen but to ensure that sufficient guidance and advice is available so, that what does happen is in the interests of the local education service and those who work for it. I shall inquire as to whether there has been research, but I am not instantly converted to the desirability of too much of it.

Mr. Straw: One of the unquestioned consequences of dismembering a national pay arrangement and handing it over to local negotiations is wage drift. What view does the Treasury take of the prospect of 75 per cent. of local authorities running their own negotiations?

Mr. Clarke: Under this Government, the Treasury has always been supportive of moves towards local pay bargaining and greater pay flexibility, because it means that the management have the ability to get more out of the work force and to use the increased expenditure on its payroll in a way that produces improvements in service. There has been no resistance from my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer or his predecessors to moving towards local pay bargaining.

It is true that there is a danger of pay drift in just moving towards local pay bargaining. A relaxed employer may decide that he will show what an enlightened local authority he represents by paying 20 per cent. more to all the teachers and that authority is then quoted by all the other authorities involved in pay bargaining. I see that Opposition Front-Bench Members are nodding enthusiastically at that. I am sorry that they share the low opinion of local government as employers that is sometimes held by Conservative Members. That is the danger, but it is up to employers to be more sophisticated and to guard against it. The pay argument could be applied to many other industries—to every company in the engineering industry and to all other large employers.

The Opposition have to consider whether they really fear the fact that employers should be allowed to opt out. They say that they do not see much more scope for variations to reflect the local pay market, or different skills, or agreements between governors, headmasters and headmistresses and staff about enhanced payment for recognisable and measurable improvements in performance. The Opposition take too nervous a view. Pay drift is a danger, but it can be avoided by sensible managers.

Local authorities must remember, especially now that their negotiating powers are being returned to them, that everything they do must be within the limit of what is reasonably affordable. If they do not agree on will simply pay the teachers more and at the damage other parts of the education service.

Mr. Steve Norris (Epping Forest): My righ learned Friend is right to say that progress o steady rather than hasty in this important area, that he will accept that clauses 8 and 9 are look to by those of us who represent extremely high such as the county of Essex, with much greater than any other part of the Bill. It is a breakthrough for us. It will allow us to o considerable problem, upon which I hope later to expand.

Caution is no doubt desirable, but no messa go out from the House today that respon authorities should not take full advantage of cla there is a demonstrable need, as there is in wes improve teachers' pay, whatever the absol throughout the country. Housing in west E expensive that teachers' pay must be improved

Mr. Clarke: My hon. Friend will be reassu that clause 8 does not inhibit the right of Es council to enter into local negotiations, if it so personal advice, however, is that Essex ought t how it proceeds. Nevertheless, Essex knows ex it wishes to do. I know that there are very real Essex that must be addressed. They can be add by the county council entering into proper bargaining arrangements.

Mr. Harry Greenway: Did my right hon. Friend have the pleasure of reading the mino that I appended to the Select Committee's Apr the pay and remuneration of teachers? If he di whether he saw that I suggested that teachers paid on an individual basis. That could be bro by means of the Bill. If that were done, teacher much happier. They would see that their cont the school—the task of teaching their subject ar other responsibilities they may have—had beer account by the school authorities. If teachers fe services were more valued, they would be mu and would feel more settled.

Mr. Clarke: At that time, I was reading Committee reports, but I remember reading reports about the minority report that my hon. appended to the Select Committee's report. I hon. Friend that a great deal of flexibility has a result of the advisory committee's recomme

Individual rewards for teachers are already of a possibility as a result of what has been n local authorities have ideas of their own, clause them to decide what, for them, are better arran the individual reward of teachers. The mor there is in the system, the more people will see a valuable way to improve rewards to the pro thereby to raise teaching standards.

The new negotiating machinery to which t effect amounts to a carefully balanced packag proper recognition to the legitimate interests their employers and the Government. It is fair parents, taxpayers and community charge pay best proposition available at a time when we to restoring negotiating machinery. It will be

addition to present efforts to recruit teachers and will, I hope, lead to further improvement in the good level of recruitment and retention in the teaching profession.

The Department carries out a survey every October of recruitment to teacher training courses in all universities, polytechnics and colleges in England and Wales. The figures are much better this year than last year. Nearly 24,000 students started initial teacher training this year. That is a quite spectacular increase of more than 2,000 compared with last year. Recruitment to primary courses is nearly 12 per cent. higher than a year ago, which is a spectacular increase. Recruitment to secondary courses is nearly 6 per cent. higher. Recruitment to the main secondary shortage subjects, except mathematics, was higher than last year. There has been an increase of 30 per cent. in the intake of modern language specialists.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Michael Fallon): Hear, hear.

Mr. Clarke: I repeat that, as I got a "Hear, hear". There has been an increase of almost a third in the recruitment of modern language specialists. Overall, recruitment was almost half as high again as in 1983, and was the highest since 1977. The House must agree that that is good news. It shows how effective our programme of action on teacher supply measures has been and that, contrary to all the myths, teaching is an attractive career and is becoming increasingly so. But we cannot rest on that—we must do better still.

Not only is recruitment suddenly up, but retention is satisfactory as well. I have been considering, for the first time, wastage in the profession. Wastage—people leaving teaching for other occupations—runs at only about 1 per cent. per year. That is a spectacularly low figure and reflects job satisfaction as well as satisfaction with pay. The general vacancy rate in our schools, contrary to constant campaigning, has not risen in the past 10 years, but I accept that there are problems in one or two places. My Department's survey earlier this year showed that vacancies this year were particularly down in September, compared with a year ago.

Recruitment and retention is satisfactory, and the new machinery will have a good starting point in the current teachers' pay and conditions document. That already covers pay, duties and working time; it provides attractive pay levels and scope for desirable differentiation; and it provides wide-ranging local flexibility.

That is the background on which we must build. I share the views which I think my right hon. Friend the Chancellor was expressing at the weekend—that we should build on it by putting the machinery in place for the proper negotiation of pay and by continuing to build up the morale of the profession yet further. It is the key deliverer of the service, and as we restore its self-esteem and job satisfaction, the beneficiaries will be pupils, who will find a motivated teaching force applying themselves with even more dedication to teaching them.

Mrs. Sylvia Heal (Mid-Staffordshire): Despite what the Minister has said, the view from the chalk face is different. Staff do not agree with his interpretation of recruitment and retention. Teachers in my constituency, with whom I have been speaking in the past few weeks, believe that only an attractive increase in salaries will recruit and retain teachers.

Mr. Clarke: I am sure that teachers always aspire to higher pay and, quite properly, they always have a pay claim in prospect. As I have said in repeated exchanges, not only is their pay much better but we are attracting more people to the profession, the wastage rate is low and vacancies are down.

Mr. Straw: Not true.

Mr. Clarke: It is true. I quite understand why unions keep up a constant stream of propaganda that seeks to undermine that position. The Labour party should occasionally, as a responsible Opposition, address itself to the facts which I described.

Mr. Norris: Will my right hon. and learned Friend give way?

Mr. Clarke: I have given way for the last time. I apologise to my hon. Friend, but I am in danger of talking out my own Bill if I give way more frequently.

The machinery can only be as good as the people who operate it. If those who are negotiating are not prepared to operate the new machinery sensibly and are not prepared to recognise realities, no machinery will be able to compensate for that. If the leaders of the teachers' unions are genuine in their claims to have the interests of education at heart—I have no reason to doubt it—and demonstrate that by approaching negotiations responsibly, I believe that the new machinery set up by the Bill will serve them well. If they return to the unrealistic claims backed up by irresponsible actions against the pupils which we have seen in the past, they are doomed to disappointment. Most importantly, they will do the education service and the teaching profession no good by returning to such an approach. I hope that they will not do that and that they will be attracted by the working of the new arrangements. I therefore commend the Bill to the House.

4.25 pm

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): I beg to move,

That this House declines to give a Second Reading to a Bill which, by undermining national pay arrangements, will divide and further weaken the education service, place standards at risk, is based on no coherent strategy to improve teacher recruitment, retention and morale, and which gives powers to the Secretary of State for which he will not properly be accountable.

As our reasoned amendment makes clear, we decline to give the Bill our endorsement. In our view, it has three major defects. First, it establishes a complex scheme for settling teachers' pay, with too much power being given to the Secretary of State for which he is not properly accountable to Parliament. Secondly, the provisions for local education authorities and for grant-maintained schools to opt out of a national pay framework will, in our judgment, still further divide the education service, to the detriment of our children's education. Thirdly, we believe that the Government have no clear strategy for dealing with the serious and increasing problems of teacher shortages, the difficulty of recruitment and retention and the problems of low morale.

The Secretary of State spoke of "sanctimonious humbug". Over the past couple of weeks, we have seen some fine examples of sanctimonious humbug among Conservative Members—*[Interruption.]* I am glad that Conservative Members appreciate that that certainly occurred.

Mr. James Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): We have not said anything.

Mr. Straw: The hon. Gentleman does not need to say anything—one has only to look at him.

All three candidates for the Conservative leadership have suddenly discovered that morale in the teaching service is low and that education matters and should be improved. That tells us principally two things about those candidates—that they can read opinion polls and that they have no shame. The polls show that there has been rising discontent with the Government's education policies, dating almost exactly from the introduction nearly three years ago of the Education Reform Bill and, coinciding with that discontent, rising and positive support for Labour's alternatives.

The responsibility for this sorry state is shared by the whole Government, not just the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher). Each candidate for the Conservative leadership voted for the Education Reform Act 1988 and the Teachers' Pay and Conditions Act 1987. That legislation removed all negotiating rights from teachers and instead left teachers, alone among any pay bargaining group, with their pay subject to imposition by fiat of the Secretary of State.

On Sunday, I read in *The Observer* a statement made by the right hon. Member for Huntingdon (Mr. Major) as part of his platform to obtain the votes of Conservative Members. It is notable that he has failed to obtain the support or vote of any of the Education Ministers—they are backing the gentlemen's candidate. The right hon. Gentleman said:

"we cannot guarantee better results in the classroom until we restore teacher's self respect, authority and respect in the community."

We would all drink to that. Why is there now a problem after 11 years of Conservative Administration? Why do teachers' self-respect, authority and respect in the community need to be restored? Teachers' morale is certainly not what it should be.

That point was made powerfully in the excellent last report, published in January this year, by the Interim Advisory Committee on School Teachers' Pay and Conditions. The committee said:

"We are in no doubt at all that teacher morale is lower than in our first two years, and that a number of factors are contributing to this."

One of the factors, the committee said, was identified by Her Majesty's senior chief inspector of schools, who said that teachers felt that they were not properly valued, and were used as

"convenient scapegoats for all society's problems."

The senior inspector is a courageous man, whom I applaud. He did not say precisely who he thought was treating teachers in that way, but the message in the report was clear—that among those who had misused and mistreated teachers were a succession of Conservative Ministers and Back Benchers who, in the early and mid-1980s, dined out on abuse of what teachers were seeking to do.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Who and when?

Mr. Straw: If the Secretary of State goes to the Library and looks up a certain speech made by the present Secretary of State for the Environment—the right hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Patten)—he will find, put together very cleverly, the insinuation that teachers' current attitudes would lead to the creation of a yob so

right hon. and learned Gentleman then loo

cuttings relating to that speech, he will disco

right hon. Friend achieved exactly what he

achieve: he managed to imply that teachers,

those with a great deal more power—n

Government—were to blame for the creatio

society.

Mr. Pawsey: I am certain that that accusati

levelled across the Chamber before. Last ti

refuted by my right hon. Friend the present S

State for the Environment. Incidentally, the

from my right hon. Friend which sticks in m

very simple one—his observation that the nea

a magic wand in education is a head teacher.

Mr. Straw: I know that the hon. Gentlem

these matters with care. I am happy to send hi

the speech made by the current Secretary of S

Environment—who then held the post of

State, Department of Education and Science, w

held by the hon. Member for Enfield, North

—and the cuttings associated with it. The

Gentleman wrote to me about the speech, a

back; but I never received a reply, which I thin

point. I sent him the cuttings too.

One of the reasons for teachers' low morale

suggestion that they are responsible for the ill

The second reason——

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: This is preposterou

want to interrupt the hon. Gentleman, bu

teachers' morale to be told so often by Labour

that they are being abused by Conservative M

seriously suggested that one unremembered s

by my right hon. Friend the Member for Bath

—and the hon. Gentleman's interpretation o

strongly disputed by my hon. Friend the

Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey)—is res

the present low morale? It is absurd to sugges

the Government's responsibility. What di

teaching profession was the public's reactio

protracted industrial dispute. Unfortunately,

party gave mindless support to that action, a

played its part in the lowering of the esteem

profession was held by the general public.

Mr. Straw: I am not surprised that the

State does not remember what happened—at

was engaged full time in lowering the morale

of the health professions.

Of course, one Minister alone was not re

succession of Ministers were responsible. The

State should read all the speeches made to

party conferences by the right hon. Memb

Valley (Mr. Baker) when he was Secretary

particularly his 1986 speech, which took a sid

section of the teaching profession. He should

report of his own senior chief inspector. I qu

report at greater length:

"But of great importance to most teachers, is

they do is seen to be valued and rated highly by

its difficulties are understood; and that teachers

are not used as convenient scapegoats for

problems. Currently, too many teachers fe

profession and its work are misjudged a

undervalued."

The reason why teachers' morale fell so greatly was partly the abuse that was heaped on them, but it was also the continuous round of change upon change which was imposed on teachers as a consequence of the ill-thought-out agenda in the Education Reform Act 1988. Conservative Members cannot gainsay that because they know that much of that agenda was badly thought out and has subsequently had to be unpicked and changed.

Thirdly, teachers' self-respect and authority was greatly undermined by the removal of negotiating rights. Fourthly, as the Secretary of State must acknowledge, teachers' pay—especially since the settlement in 1986—has lagged behind that of comparable pay groups. The Secretary of State swapped statistics about what had happened to teachers' pay in the past 15 years. Over 15 years of any Government—even the present Government, who have a lower record of growth year on year than previous Governments—real living standards are likely to rise. The graph in the Select Committee report makes it clear that there has been a real rise in teachers' pay since 1974. I am not arguing about that and it is sensible that we should agree on known facts.

However, teachers' pay—this point is of critical importance—has lagged behind that of comparable groups. That is shown clearly by the other graph in the Select Committee report.

Mr. Pawsey *indicated assent.*

Mr. Straw: I am glad to see that the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) acknowledges that fact on this occasion. The slide down from the high point of Houghton has been great relative to other non-manual earnings. Conservative Members believe, more than we do, in untrammelled markets. Whether people take a job depends partly on the relative pay available for that job compared with other jobs. It is not surprising that teacher shortages have arisen, given that the pay of teachers has so declined relative to that of other groups.

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): My hon. Friend will be aware—the Secretary of State will also be aware because I shall tell him—that I have two daughters and a son-in-law in teaching. I get my ear bashed regularly about how the Government have treated the teaching profession. Whenever I have had the opportunity, I have asked the Government to get their noses out of negotiations between the employers and the trade unions on wage increases for the teaching profession. Let there be no mistake about it—the present Secretary of State will poke his nose in, too. He upset the health service and he will do the same with education.

Mr. Straw: I do not wish to comment on the personal anatomy of the Secretary of State, which is actually rather fine, but I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) that the Secretary of State will seek unnecessarily to interfere in the outcome of the negotiations. Like my hon. Friend, I have many family members who are teachers and I know just how difficult it is—

Mr. Pawsey: It cannot be so bad then, can it?

Mr. Straw: It is bad. I know just how difficult it is for those members of my family to make ends meet.

The Library briefing document which, as ever, is extremely helpful, contains on its penultimate page information on what has happened to the salaries graduate teachers. It shows that, in real, terms the start salary of graduate teachers will have gone down fr £10,330 in October 1987 to £9,990 at the beginning of n year. The final salary that a career classroom gradu teacher with incentive allowance B can expect has g down by even more—from £17,390 to £16,660. That i significant drop, so it is not surprising to learn of the gr difficulties that many authorities have had not only recruiting teachers, but in retaining them.

We must also take into account the fact that Government, through all the reports of the inte advisory committee, have consistently failed fully to fu any of the awards. I pay tribute to the IAC because reports have been good, but I cannot pay tribute to Government, who have failed at any stage to back recommendations fully with cash. As a consequence that, since the 1986 award, teachers' pay has decli rather than increased in real terms. That was made clea the charter on pay of the latest interim advisory commit report, which states of inflation in paragraph 4.3:

"Even if it falls back to 7·5 per cent. at the end of financial year, as forecast by the Government, the majority teachers will be worse off than a year previously, whate then happens during 1990-91."

Inflation has been higher than anticipated. Teachers worse off than they were a year ago——

Mr. Norris: Since we are discussing members of hon. Gentleman's family, he will know that I have honour to represent his mother, who ploughs a lon furrow as a Labour councillor in my constituency. T hon. Gentleman will therefore know from perso experience that, if the public are asked to judge betw the words of my right hon. and learned Friend Secretary of State and the hon. Gentleman on recruitme they will know whom to believe.

In my constituency, a dreadful letter promising consequences for September 1989 was issued to parent the beginning of the summer term of that ye Understandably, it worried them and many of them wr to me. In fact, at the beginning of September, all bu handful of posts were filled and that handful represen no more posts than are usually vacant at any time of ye This year, the same process was repeated—the sa scaremongering, the same stories and the same anxi among parents—following which exactly the sa happened in September. All vacancies were filled, barr a mere half dozen which represented the usual vaca factor. Does that not show that my right hon. and lear Friend's statistics are much more valid than the h Gentleman's qualitative observations?

Mr. Straw: I am glad to know that the hon. Member Epping Forest (Mr. Norris) is accusing Mr. Paul Wh the Conservative chairman of Essex county council, scaremongering. Mr. White is also chairman of Conservative group on the Association of Cou Councils, and now chairman of the Convention of Lo Education Authorities. He is a responsible man, and has said what everyone involved in education knows—t there are increasing difficulties in recruiting and retain teachers.

It is perfectly likely that there are people in front classes, but the hon. Gentleman should know that proportion of people who are not qualified to teach subjects that they are having to teach increased betw

[Mr. Straw]

1984 and 1988 and in certain subjects now stands at more than 50 per cent. If the hon. Gentleman were to speak to anyone running a school in his constituency or elsewhere, he would find that the numbers of recruits for any vacancy and the quality of recruits for that vacancy are lower and will get worse.

Mr. Steinberg: In the north, where I come from, there is a phrase known as "arguing the cheat". I am afraid that the hon. Member for Epping Forest (Mr. Norris) is arguing the cheat now. He said earlier that he was delighted that his local authority would be able to opt out and negotiate privately, because of the problems that it faced in recruiting teachers. He now says that there are no problems in Essexs and no vacancies—teachers are easy to come by. He cannot argue both ends of the stick.

Mr. Norris: Yes, I can.

Mr. Straw: Knowing the hon. Gentleman's previous occupation, I am sure that he will argue each end of the stick. If he cannot find the engine in the front, he will tell us that it is in the back. But he serves neither himself nor his constituents well if he goes on peddling this sort of nonsense. He should go around a few schools. I know the position in west Essex rather better than he does; teacher shortages there are as severe now as in the early 1960s.

Opening the debate, the Secretary of State said that two of the candidates in the leadership struggle were behind the policies in the Bill. He suggested that the other candidate, the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine), might also be behind them, with the implication that he might not be.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The other two were in the Government who devised the Bill. The right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) is not in the Government, but so far as I am aware he intends to vote for the Bill.

Mr. Straw: It is useful to know that the right hon. Member for Henley will not be in the Government. I advise the Secretary of State to keep his options open.

The right hon. Member for Henley said two weekends ago that he wanted to move towards central payment of teachers' salaries by the Exchequer. When that was put to the Prime Minister by the hon. Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor), the Prime Minister replied on 13 November that the effect would be to add 4p or 5p to income tax. That is the calculation arrived at, taking account of the present local authority contribution to teachers' salaries.

Yesterday, I asked the Secretary of State and the Chancellor of the Exchequer what the impact of such a move would be. I appreciate that both have other things on their minds, but I am sorry to say that the Secretary of State dodged the question and refused to tell me the present size of the local authority contribution to teachers' pay. I have yet to receive an answer from the Chancellor. May we take it that what the Prime Minister said on 13 November was correct—that if, as the right hon. Member for Henley suggested, we move to full payment of teachers' salaries by the Exchequer, it would add 4p or 5p to income tax?

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: If that was all no money was clawed back from local would indeed be true.

Mr. Straw: That is a useful point of discussions.

Mr. Clarke: Is such a move Oppositi think that any Conservatives have sug that.

Mr. Straw: The right hon. Membe suggested it. He has also suggested that it without raising income tax. He e prospect of cuts in income tax—Cons with a late vote to cast may wish to take The right hon. Gentleman certainly did anyone else. It is not the policy of the will not be the policy of the Labour Go in that direction.

It is always my belief that the forma negotiating arrangements should as far the reality of the interests involved. The employment and pay is that there ar interests—teachers and head teachers w by six associations, the employers who local authority associations, and the important to be clear as to how and why interest arises. As with any public secto this size, it arises partly out of the Gov in the total size of public spending an ensure that inflation is kept as low as po the whole of the Government's interest could be coped with through the us relating to the revenue support grant s the only mechanism for registering interest in, say, local authority man settlements and the APC and T settlem satisfactorily.

It has long been accepted, ho Government have a wider interest in tea from the Secretary of State's statutory the supply and training of teachers and f the education service, and from the polit any Government will be held partly r performance of the education service.

With that in mind, there are three wa the Government's interest—directly in n was the approach taken by Burnham; b to which the Government give evidence caveat that they will accept its conclusio are clear and compelling reasons for ch the review body; and thirdly, the Gove final arbiter and take reserve powers o

The Bill reflects the third approa powers to the Secretary of State to ove of negotiations and to establish a teache when negotiations have failed or when unsatisfactory to the Secretary of State conclusions can then be overriden by the and his overriding of its conclusions or l them would not be the subject of autom approval by the House under the affi procedure. The Secretary of State is unnecessary powers, for which he is no the by, in taking those powers, he is als International Labour Organisation con

As I read the Bill, and having listened to the Secretary of State, there seems to be no stage until the completion of negotiations or their breakdown at which the Secretary of State is obliged to state his priorities and constraints for the teachers' pay settlement for the following year. If that is so, it injects a wholly unnecessary element of chance into the negotiations. The Secretary of State may well have a bottom line—for example, on the global sum available or on something that he regards as very important in terms of the structure of salary scales or conditions. If he keeps quiet, the local authorities and trade unions could enter into negotiations in good faith, reach an agreement which was outwith the Secretary of State's view and only then would the negotiators discover that what they had negotiated in good faith and without notice to the contrary from the Secretary of State was actually unacceptable to him.

If the Secretary of State believes that certain issues are important, it is far better that the negotiators are aware of those interests at an early stage. The Secretary of State should not be able at a later stage to raise issues which require him to overturn the outcome of negotiations if he has not given notice of those issues. I am not claiming that the Secretary of State should be a secret party to the negotiations or that he must dot every last comma——

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The committee can refer back.

Mr. Straw: —but it seems to me that the negotiators should have a rough idea of the global sum available or of the likely ball park in terms of finance. That is covered by what the Secretary of State said about inter-quartile settlements.

If the Secretary of State had a particular view about the need to retain new teachers in the service—something that I believe is important—and regarded that as a sticking point in the outcome of negotiations, it would be important for the negotiators to be aware of that. It should not be an imposition on the negotiators, but they should have notice of the Secretary of State's opinion. It would be open to the negotiators to negotiate knowing the Secretary of State's view, or for them to try to change the Secretary of State's mind. I hope that the Secretary of State will take that point on board.

I said a moment ago that the Bill's provisions appear to be in breach of the requirements of the International Labour Organisation, a point that was made powerfully by my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery). In the Select Committee on Education, Science and Arts, the Secretary of State was scornful of the ILO. That is part of his stock in trade when he is in difficulty, but the ILO needs to be treated with more respect because we are a signatory to it and at no stage have the Government sought to resile from their commitment to it.

The ILO's comments about the structure are serious. It has stated that the Government, through

> "the Secretary of State appears to have an absolute discretion to disregard any recommendations with which it disagrees, even if that recommendation has the full support of all parties to the negotiating process. This does not leave the 'final decision' with 'the parties'. The Government has not attempted to justify its proposals on the basis of 'compelling reasons of national economic interest'."

I have spelt out what I believe to be the entirely legitimate interests of any Government in teachers' pay. We all accept that there must be a final arbiter in what can sometimes be difficult negotiations, but there is that these arrangements go too far and are in bre ILO convention.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I believe that the hon. G has quoted the opinion of a committee of layn ILO. It is not a legal opinion. That committee re representations from the Government about bre convention, so it cannot be said at the moment authoritative view of the ILO. If the ILO is n come to that opinion, that is because it has understand that teachers in this country are emp a basis whereby although the employer is authority, central Government provide about t of the cost.

I can well understand that that rather unusual is not replicated in most ILO member states. Mos states would recognise the Government's determine the level of a pay settlement for civi where that is paid in full and they would Government to keep out of negotiations in v Government were not the employer. That is the in this country. The problem is that the ILO cottoned on to the fact that although we are not s employer, central Government provide two thir cost. That is why, as we all agree, the Governme legitimate interest in the outcome of negotiations be allowed to bring their influence to bear.

Mr. Straw: There were some worried look officials' Box as the Secretary of State said that committee had not considered the Government The committee received the Government's reply October 1990. In its preamble to the conclusions in great detail exactly what the Government had will lend the Secretary of State my copy, but he do something about his briefing. A committee c the matter, but it had full notice of the Gove position.

I wish to refer briefly to the opt-out arran Most of us had hopes that the end of the Tha would lead to an end to the paranoia w unfortunately characterised much of the Gove approach to local authorities and trade unions. S looking at the Bill, the chance of that habit of th years being changed seems slim.

The United Kingdom is a very large country of people in it—*[Laughter.]* Small countries do to have their administration divided regionally an

The size of this country means that any nation must have its administration split, regionally an The choice is either to have a service administered authorities which are locally elected and accounta with the national health service, to have regional administration by appointed, unaccountable boc packed with partisan appointments with w Secretary of State is all too familiar.

I believe that we are better off with a model unc local authorities run the education service, produces better administration, better value fo and is also better politics for the governing something that the present Government alway because responsibility can be shared for the kind that is produced. Allowing local authorities to o pay negotiations, as with permitting schools to o local authority control, is not a clearly thought

[Mr. Straw]

policy, but a piece of guerrilla warfare against the established position of local authorities. As policy, it is inherently irresponsible.

The test of any policy is what happens if it works. The previous Secretary of State for Education and Science was frightened about the kind of conclusion that would occur if the policy of schools opting out actually worked. On 13 October, he told the *Financial Times*:

"if a majority of the nation's schools did opt out, the result could be an administrative nightmare for central government, which would have to supervise and fund thousands of schools."

That is exactly the case. Opting out may be able to work administratively for a handful of schools, but if a large number of schools opt out, that will replicate all the problems which occur in administering the health service and a parallel system of administration would have to be set up.

Exactly the same thing would happen if a large number of local authorities opt out of pay negotiations. The Secretary of State said that he anticipated 75 per cent. of local authorities opting out of pay negotiations. Where does that leave the Government's legitimate interest in the outcome of those negotiations? If they all opt out, the Government cannot take any interest in the outcome of the negotiations. The Secretary of State blithely says that he is perfectly willing to anticipate that, but is he willing to anticipate a situation in which the only constraint that the Government can exercise over teachers' pay is through the revenue support grant mechanism which has no control over or say in the conditions or structure of teachers' pay? Is that the conclusion at which the Secretary of State wishes to arrive?

Mr. Clarke: Those that opt out would be making a comparison between the national arrangements in which the Government were engaged and having their own local arrangements where they would have to decide what policies they could afford. I described the circumstances in which I thought that local education authorities would make their own arrangements where they had specific management objectives—for example, particular recruitment problems which the local authority in Essex could not overcome without using that option. I do not think that that policy poses a threat and I am not altogether sure whether the hon. Member for Blackburn is against it.

Mr. Straw: Either the Secretary of State has not understood my question or, more likely, he has decided not to answer it, for reasons that I well understand. There is a fatal contradiction between the position that he took 10 minutes ago, when he not only argued strongly for the Government to maintain a financial interest in the settlement and pay two thirds of the money but said that the Government have a major interest in the nature of the education service.

Mr. Clarke: I did not.

Mr. Straw: With great respect, the Secretary of State did say that, as the record will show. He now says that the Government's only interest is in the overall pay bill, not the structure of the teaching profession. I believe—I think that the Secretary of State believes in truth—that the Government have an interest in the structure of the profession, the conditions of employment, and whether heads and deputies should be paid more, relative to other groups. The Secretary of State must consider that issue before allowing individual authorities to opt out of a national pay framework by picking up notes on the back of an envelope written by the Adam Smith Institute without any clear thought about the final conclusion.

We accept the need for local authorities and governors of voluntary-aided schools to have a wide measure of discretion over teachers' pay. It is our judgment that the framework established by the interim advisory committee secures a good balance between the need for a national framework and the need for local discretion. It would be unwise, even for the present Government, to begin to dismantle or stage guerrilla attacks on the framework before it has had a chance to settle properly.

What will the consequence be of allowing individual local authorities or grant-maintained schools to opt out of a national framework, especially when the Government do not intend to give those authorities any more money? The consequence will be that some local authorities, those which can command the greatest increase in resources, and some schools, those that can raise cash from parents, will pay more. At a time of teacher shortages—they do exist—the consequence will be that the richer, wealthier authorities will pay teachers more at the expense of the poor authorities with the greatest problems. Precisely that consequence has flown as a consequence of city technology colleges paying their teachers more than the scales that authorities in surrounding districts are able to pay their teachers.

How on earth can the opting-out procedure improve the standards of the one third of children who are getting a raw deal, usually to be found in those local authorities with the least resources? What will the balkanisation of a national pay framework do for teachers' mobility? It is important that teachers are mobile.

Under the provisions for a local authority to opt out of national pay negotiations, at least that local authority has to apply to the Secretary of State, who then makes a decision about the arrangements. Under the proposals for a grant-maintained school to opt out, under the arrangements announced in April, there was an obligation on the governors of a grant-maintained school to consult with staff. That proposal was contained in the Department of Education and Science press notice of 26 April. The Bill, however, contains no obligation for the governors to consult anybody. In addition, once an application has been made by the governors, the Secretary of State has no discretion to refuse the application. If the Secretary of State has discretion to judge whether the arrangements are appropriate in respect of a local authority, why can he not exercise his discretion in respect of a grant-maintained school?

Mr. Clarke: Because the governors of a grant-maintained school have a discrete budget and have responsibility for keeping the school solvent, and are bound to operate within those confines. A local education authority has a much bigger budget and the scale is quite different. It is conceivable that the local education authority might be pursuing a policy of confronting the Government on their financial contribution, which the Government would like to approve. At the national level, where we are agreed that the Government must have an interest, the contribution has a direct bearing on the Government's issuing of revenue support grant.

If a local authority seeks to leave the system, or a grant-maintained school breaks out of its own violition, they do so knowing that the Government's national obligation has already been defined and they are constrained by what they know to be the available resources. That system is not anarchic and does not constitute balkanisation—it merely allows a further logical extension of the local flexibility that we already have, and which I was pleased to hear the hon. Gentleman welcome a few moments ago.

Mr. Straw: The policy is quite different from local flexibility and will lead to a two-tier service, particularly in the context in which the Government seek to bribe schools to opt out of local authority control by giving them money that they could not otherwise have. It does not seem sensible for the Secretary of State to have some sort of reserve power over the applications from grant-maintained schools. What happens if Stratford school, which has been allowed to opt out and is now losing most of its pupils, suddenly decides to pay its teachers on a different scale? That could have a further serious and damaging effect on the education of the children in that school.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): Why?

Mr. Straw: Because it could lead to a further loss of teachers—children have to be taught by someone. The opting-out system is destroying that school. Given the Secretary of State's responsibility for the education of those children, he should have reserve powers over what may happen—*[Interruption.]* What did the Secretary of State say?

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order.

Mr. Straw: The Secretary of State raised the issue of teacher shortages. The new arrangements are set against a background of serious teacher shortages. The Secretary of State is a fool to himself if he believes that teacher recruitment, retention and morale are under control, because they are not. A major survey conducted by his own Department this January showed that there had been a 50 per cent. increase in the number of teacher vacancies over a two-year period. The Secretary of State should look at that survey. I know that he has a reputation for liking neither statistics nor statisticians, but he should look more fully at the data.

The Secretary of State spoke of recruitment to teacher training courses, which is welcome, but there are two factors that the Secretary of State should consider. First, recruitment in the sectors of most extreme shortage is down again this year. Figures for today, given to me by the Graduate Teacher Training Registry, show that maths applicants are down 760 against a target of 1,170, religious education applicants are down 219 against a target of 328, home economics applicants are down 60 against a target of 120 and craft design and technology applicants are down 240 against a target of 400. Those problems of under-recruitment now are built on year-by-year problems of under-recruitment.

Secondly, the Secretary of State should bear in mind that of every three people who enter teacher training, only one is left in teaching five years after qualification. It is no good the Secretary of State merely reading out his brief about low levels of wastage. There are terrifying levels of wastage through teacher training courses, between qualification and entry to the profession, and from the profession, especially in the first five years. It is because of those wastage levels that there are as many people with teaching qualifications outside the school system as within the school system—even the Secretary of State's officials confirm that. If it were all so wonderful, we should not be in that position.

The long title of the Bill refers to making arrangements for teachers' pay and connected purposes. In the Bill, the Government have missed a great opportunity to embark on a programme to re-establish teachers' professionalism and sense of pride. The Bill should contain measures properly to increase the recruitment, retention and morale of teachers and should establish a general teachers council. That was recommended by the all-party Select Committee on Education, Science and Arts, it would cost little and it would dramatically improve teachers' sense of professionalism and self-esteem.

We need a reform of teacher training with much better induction and support, and the Government must tackle the problem of the many people who train to teach and either do not enter the profession or drop out in the first two or three years. We need a national core curriculum for teacher training to provide many different entry routes but only one exit level—that of graduate qualification. We need to pilot teacher training schools so that the burden of inducting new young teachers does not continue to fall on those schools with a large number of vacancies and, therefore, the greatest amount of stress.

We must have real programmes for career development for teachers. That includes appraisal. I read an interesting interview in *The Times* on Monday, given by the Secretary of State. As part of the general November approach of Ministers, he seems to be dumping the policy of his predecessors. Speaking of teacher appraisal and his predecessor, he said:

"Things have changed since John made his decision, and it is apparent that it is not working on a voluntary basis."

What has changed is that the Government realise that the previous Secretary of State made a major error by not implementing the approach for national appraisal agreed by all parties to the scheme. The Secretary of State said that the £45 million required to implement that scheme is ludicrous, and that it was the estimate of the trade unions. He should do his homework before he comes to the House.

The estimate of £45 million in "School Teacher Appraisal: a National Framework" is not the trade union estimate but that of the working party on which two of his very senior officials sat and to which the Government are committed. The sum of £45 million is 0·5 per cent. of the teachers' pay bill. That is a small price to pay for giving the profession a proper system of career development. If such a system can be put in place, there will be much less chance of the sort of wastage that occurs at present.

In addition to teacher appraisal, we need systems which will reward new teachers and encourage them to stay in the profession and will better reward the career classroom teacher. The speed with which Conservative Members and leadership candidates are jettisoning so much of what they previously stood for, as we have discovered in the debate, is proof—if any were needed—of the failure of the past 11 years. It also proves that the Conservative party has few coherent policies, no principles and no shame.

The Bill is based on the tired and failed agenda of the past 11 years, on exactly that bizarre combination of

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over-centralisation and near anarchy which was the hallmark of the 1987 Act. It will give unnecessary power to the Secretary of State for which he will not be properly accountable. It will divide and weaken the profession, and that will place at risk better standards of education. We shall oppose it in the Lobby.

5.12 pm

Mr. Bob Dunn (Dartford): I apologise in advance to the House because I shall not be able to remain for the whole of the debate owing to a long-standing and important commitment in another part of the Palace of Westminster.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: My hon. Friend is the returning officer.

Mr. Dunn: I am not the returning officer, but one day I hope to be.

I have known the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) for 11 years, and I know of him for many years before our election to the House in 1979. I can go back the best part of a quarter of a century to the time when the hon. Gentleman was a student leader and I was a student. I remember him coming to address a student body in Manchester, when he was described as shallow, devious and vituperative. I am glad to say that he has remained true to the promise of his youth. His recent comments about my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister were disgraceful. He reached a new low in vituperation. I have heard it said of the hon. Gentleman, "Show him a belt and he has to hit below it."

On 18 July, I asked the Labour party to make plain its intentions about the future of selective education in north-west Kent. The hon. Member for Durham, North-West (Ms. Armstrong) promised to send me a copy of the Labour party's review. I still await that document. A few days ago, the hon. Member for Blackburn rather churlishly refused to let me intervene, and at that time the hon. Lady again said that she would send me a copy of the review. I am still waiting.

The hon. Member for Blackburn spoke about re-creating the old coalition of vested interests. There was nothing new or special in his speech. I was an Under-Secretary at the Department of Education and Science for five years, from 1983 to 1988. During that time, in 1985 and 1986, the Burnham arrangements collapsed. Those arrangements worked to a degree for almost 70 years and were based on consensus, the coming together of the various interests to decide on teachers' pay but not on conditions of service. Percentage or cash increases reflected the needs of the local authority, the schools and the Government.

Unfortunately, that consensus was destroyed by the coming together and working together of left-wing local education authority leaders and left-wing trade unionists. When that consensus was destroyed—I am sure that hon. Members will agree that it was destroyed—it created an inevitable vacuum in the arrangements by which teachers' pay was settled. Burnham was finished.

I welcome the attempts by successive Secretaries of State to make the interim arrangements work. Clearly, those arrangements were conceived as only temporary. Something had to be arranged which would reflect the genuine and decent interests of the various parties. I totally support the Bill, because it does much to square the circle of the difficulties that we have inherited.

I should like to deal with an issue in which I have taken a special interest in recent years—the differences in teachers' pay, recruitment and retention between the south-east and the rest of the country. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister started her political career in my Kent constituency 40 years ago. In that constituency, there are some difficulties in arranging an adequate and varied short list for senior teacher posts. My hon. Friend the Member for Epping Forest (Mr. Norris) spoke about that. In view of the national pay scale, no ambitious teacher is prepared to forego the quality of life and living standards that obtain in the north-west and propose to give up his home by applying for a job in London or the Home Counties. Those areas have a higher cost of living and certainly a higher cost of housing.

On many occasions in the House and to different Secretaries of State, I have advocated the need for regional pay and for schools to become cost-centred pay bargaining units. Therefore, I welcome the part of the Bill that provides for local education authorities or grant-maintained schools to opt out of national pay bargaining arrangements. If the local education authority or the grant-maintained schools that I currently have and that I will have decide to adopt a degree of local flexibility and to pay the market rate, that would be good for the schools in my constituency.

If this debate is to be genuine, we must recognise that one of our problems is that a science or chemistry graduate with a good degree could expect a salary of between £10,000 and £14,000 on leaving university if starting at a pharmaceutical plant somewhere in London, but if he or she started teacher training or began probationary work in a school, the salary would be much lower.

We need the flexibility to recruit staff if we are to bring teachers back into teaching. Many graduates who leave teacher training colleges or university with bachelor of educaiton degrees do not even step inside a school. Those are the men and women whom we need to bring back into our schools so that we can give variety and choice to those who govern our schools when they are recruiting. Therefore, I welcome the opt-out arrangement, because it will give schools flexibility when determining their recruitment arrangements.

More importantly, however, it will show school governors the realism that they must adopt in their day-to-day and month-to-month running of our schools. There is no doubt among my hon. Friends—or, I am sure, among Opposition Members—that the arrangements for the local financial management of schools has opened the eyes of many school governors as never before.

School governors, who often used to be ciphers who sat on the platform at speech day or prize day and went to the annual cheese and wine party given by the parent teachers association, often had no concept of the problems facing the local education authorities. If a window was broken in the school, a docket was sent to county hall or to the local education office nearby and, about a week later, someone from direct labour would turn up to repair the window at great cost. Giving school governing bodies control over the budget has led to the inevitable realisation that the administration's life is not always as easy as they have

thought. Governing bodies have started to realise that those who run our education authorities have to decide their priorities.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Sevenoaks (Mr. Wolfson) can confirm, my county of Kent has suffered in the past 10 years. We were starved of financial support by the last Labour Government because our county would not go down the comprehensive route. When there is talk about "evil women"—I deprecate such talk in public life—the person who should stand at the Bar to apologise to my hon. Friends and to me is the right hon. Shirley Williams, for the great damage that she did to our schools when she was Secretary of State for Education and Science. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] There is rare unanimity in the Chamber, except for the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor). However, I know that he knows that, when the right hon. Lady was doing that demolition work, she was a member of the Labour party and acted with the full authority of the Labour Government of the day. We know jolly well that, given the opportunity—which, of course, they will not be—Opposition Members would tread the same path as before.

Opting out will become not only fashionable but the norm. The relative advantages of such flexibility will be seen by teachers, unions and school governors alike as an enormous benefit to those who maintain our schools. If there is a problem in recruiting a science, physics or history teacher to fill a vacancy, the governors will have to take whatever decision they think fit in the light of the priorities set by the school governing body.

I gather that *The Independent* was very much in favour of such flexibility on 23 July, which it described as

"a simple and beneficial reform".

It continued:

"This is clearly the right thing to do . . . National bargaining has a number of drawbacks. It enhances the importance of the teachers' unions, whose concern for the well-being of the children is, to put it charitably, well concealed . . . It is one of many forms of central control that British schools would be better off without".

The Daily Telegraph, which is a well-known paper of the centre—*[Laughter.]*—well, I regard it as being in the centre—also stated on 23 July that the proposals are

"constructive and long overdue . . . Local bargaining would not only help to address teacher shortages, it would also show how State-run concerns need not be bound by the model of the socialist command economy".

I am sure that no hon. Member would disagree with that.

I hope to alert the country—there is a lot of alerting going on at the moment—to the fact that the Labour party has adopted its traditional servility to the teacher unions. Nothing has changed. It is said of the Opposition's education team: "Show me a vested interest and I will kneel before it."

The hon. Member for Blackburn has talked about his plans for the future. In the final sentences of his speech, he said that he would like this and that. I, too, would like something and it is only a small request. I hope——

Mr. Straw: For a job.

Mr. Dunn: In the handing out of jobs, all hon. Members know that a tyre is never recycled twice.

The hon. Member for Blackburn said what he would like. I make a plea to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State. I hope that, in the fulness of time, he will abolish Her Majesty's inspectorate of schools and replace it with an educational audit commission, which will have the responsibility for ensuring that the reforms that we have set in place are measured and evaluated and that there are also value-for-money assessments——

Mr. Straw *rose*——

Mr. Dunn: The hon. Gentleman knows me too well. Last time we met, he did not do me the courtesy of giving way, and I shall not give way to him now.

Before I was so rudely interrupted, I was saying that the abolition of HMI would be welcome, as would the establishment of an educational audit commission, which could evaluate the educational reforms and give value-for-money assessments, and which should be essential and integral parts of our plans for the future.

In conclusion, I read the reasoned amendment of the Leader of the Opposition and his supporters with great interest and a little amusement. It states:

"That this House declines to give a Second Reading to a Bill which, by undermining national pay arrangements, will divide and further weaken the education service".

By their very nature, national pay arrangements divide and weaken the education service. That is why the Bill must be supported. The amendment then refers to placing "standards at risk". That is an element of cant beyond even the scope of the hon. Member for Blackburn. Time and time again in the past year, the hon. Gentleman has been challenged to make his position clear to the people of Dartford. I am the hon. Member for Dartford, and I have a responsibility to the people of Dartford. I ask the hon. Member for Blackburn whether I can now say to the people of Dartford that it is Labour party policy to abolish our grammar schools? The answer is yes, is it not?

Mr. Straw *rose*——

Mr. Dunn: No, the hon. Gentleman can act like a nodding dog. He has only to nod in answer to my questions. Can I say to the people of Dartford that the Labour party would take into local authority control the New Leigh city technology college? The answer is yes, by the nodding dog's consent. Can I say to the people of Dartford that the Labour party will take into local authority control the grant-maintained grammar school for girls at Wilmington? The nodding dog is saying, "Yes, yes, yes." Can I say to the people of Dartford that all the systems will be abolished and all that they will be permitted is a comprehensive system and no choice? The nodding dog is saying, "Yes, yes, yes."

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: What about the assisted places scheme?

Mr. Dunn: I shall come to that in a minute. Perhaps my hon. Friend will contain his fervour.

The Opposition's amendment claims that the Bill will "place standards at risk". High standards are achieved only through competition, the ability to choose, and parental pressure. When there is only one system in a community, which permits no choice, how can there be standards?

Mr. Burt: Does my hon. Friend agree that it is possible that the standards of the Leader of the Opposition could be raised if there was a little competition on the Opposition Benches?

Mr. Dunn: I would not want to intrude into that debate. As one who has gone through the past few weeks with

[Mr. Dunn]

some trepidation and concern, I think that it would be better if the Labour party held its leadership election in the near future——

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): The Labour party is facing a crisis.

Mr. Dunn: My hon. Friend is right. However, I do not want to stray from the essential theme of my speech. I hope that my hon. Friends will be quiet so that I can go down my chosen route.

Choice means standards. Variety and a range of provision lead to an improvement in standards, not the attitude, "You can have any colour of car you want, as long as it is black." That is Labour party policy, and that is why it is ashamed to state its true policy.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) said, not only does the Opposition's policy mean the end of all those provisions, and the imposition of one system; it also means the abolition of the assisted places scheme. I served as a Back Bencher on the Committee that considered the Bill that introduced that scheme, and the introduction of city technology colleges was my idea. I can truly tell my constituents that the Labour party would do all the things I have mentioned because there is an amity of interest—[HON. MEMBERS: "A what?"]—an amity of interest on the Opposition Front Bench.

Mr. Fatchett: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Dunn: No.

The Opposition's amendment states that the Bill

"is based on no coherent strategy to improve teacher recruitment, retention and morale".

The Government have a strategy for the raising of standards, for the improvement of parental choice, for variety, and for the accountability of governors and schools to the consumer. There is nothing wrong with that.

There is a noticeable absence of any coherent strategy from the Opposition. Why? It is because nothing is said by Opposition Members unless Mr. Mandelson allows it to be said. Every Opposition speech must be stamped with the approval not of the Egg Marketing Board but of Mr. Mandelson.

Mr. Fatchett: The latter part of the hon. Gentleman's remarks shows that he has little regard for standards. He should update the information that he gives to the House. Peter Mandelson is no longer in the employ of the Labour party.

The hon. Gentleman made a number of points about standards. Could he explain why, when Martin Turner published figures in the summer that showed a decline in reading standards, the Government had no answer and had no figures to show what was happening to reading standards in our schools?

Mr. Dunn: The hon. Gentleman's intervention was both sketchy and shaky. Although Mr. Mandelson is no longer in the direct employ of the Labour party, I suspect that the aroma lingers on. Somewhere in the office of the Leader of the Opposition, there is a little gnome in the image of the hon. Member for Blackburn. It sits there and says, "No, you can't say that. Yes, you can say that." That is dangerous for an Opposition who seek to expose our difficulties. We have a strategy and a commitment.

I will read the speeches of Opposition Membe especially those of the hon. Member for Sheffi Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery), the grandfather of Labour party. I know that he will make a robust telling speech, and I am sure that he will be the first to that his party has no policy. In the light of what was s today, it has not, it will not, and it cannot.

5.36 pm

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): hon. Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn) can be delightf droll. During the 300 and more hours that we faced e other across the Committee Room when we were debat the so-called reform Bill—I would call it a deformed —he enlightened many a 30 seconds with lovely stories. came out with the most reactionary thoughts in the m charmingly acceptable language, as he has just done ag I pay him a tribute, because after he was a junior Mini there must have been a time when he went to see the Pr Minister and said to her, "Yes, yes, yes," but she s "No, no, no," and threw him out. Indeed, she did that v many Conservative Members, one or two of whom here today. She was merciless, but they have had t revenge. The daggers came out and they threw her The hon. Gentleman may even be invited back into Government.

I want to talk about the reality of the Bill, someth that the hon. Gentleman avoided with some skill. I sorry that the Secretary of State is not in the Chamb have known him for quite a long time. Last week, he c to the Select Committee with a couple of officials from Department. I have served on that Select Commi almost from the beginning. It is customary for Ministe come to the Committee with the serried ranks of inspectors who know about education and who car appealed to about education. Instead, during the whol the research into teacher shortages, one of the two offi was the only person who told us that he had n encountered low teacher morale. He was at the Sc Committee last week, and when he was asked a quest he answered it typically with a monosyllable. I think he said, "No." The other official said practically noth

There is a qualitative change in the approach education. Instead of the inspectors who know understand education, we had a couple of departme bureaucrats who wanted to talk only about money bec money is the key to what is happening.

When I heard the Secretary of State waxing ly about the high salaries that teachers are supposed to er I thought that he should contact Andrew Lloyd Webb agent, to see whether his words could be set to musi could be called, "Kenneth Clarke Superstar" or somet like that. Elaine Page could pay the role of a prima do schoolteacher, singing how joyous it is to teach 40 and how lovely to get a miserable wage and practically no morale. That is the true posiition, but Government refuse to face up to it at any cost. That be a great part of their undoing in what I hope will b not-too-distant future.

I refer now to the terms in which the Internati Labour Organisation report talks about the Bill. It pr that the Government broke international law with Teachers' Pay and Conditions Act 1987. It is no use Secretary of State arguing that the report was produce only a minor committee, because it is one of the m

committees of the ILO, which itself is affiliated to the United Nations Organisation—and the report has its agreement too. It is not just a piece of paper, but a major report.

Paragraph 72 of the report states:

"The arrangements described by the Government in its communication of 4 October 1990"—

yet the Secretary of State said that there had been no communication—

"do not appear to be compatible with these principles. The Government, through the Secretary of State, appears to have an absolute discretion to disregard any recommendation with which it disagrees, even if the recommendation has the full support of all parties to the negotiating process. This does not leave the 'final decision' with 'the parties'. The Government has not attempted to justify its proposals on the basis of 'compelling reasons of national economic interest.' Like the provisions of the 1987 Act, the new arrangements cannot be regarded as 'exceptional' in character or as operating only for a 'reasonable period.' Nor do they appear to provide 'adequate safeguards' to protect workers' living standards."

The following paragraph states that the Bill is really only about consultation and has nothing to do with negotiation, because whatever negotiations have taken place through whatever parties were involved, they would be disregarded, and could be disregarded, by the Secretary of State, who can then decide what the salaries of teachers should be, in his opinion.

The hon. Member for Dartford spoke about rubber stamping, but we have seen 11 years of the Conservative party being terrified by the local headmistress. Conservative Members did not dare say a word wrong, because the Prime Minister would have thrown them out. The hon. Gentleman accuses us of rubber stamping, but we saw Conservative Members crawling and grovelling to the nearly ex-Prime Minister. I emphasise that not all Conservative Members did that. Some noble souls did not grovel, but they paid the price.

The ILO points out that the Bill contravenes article 4 of convention 98, which was ratified by the present Government. The principles enunciated by the ILO are among those to which the Government are party, yet the Government are violating a convention to which they are a signatory. Despite that, the Secretary of State makes empty arguments in trying to prove that the ILO does not represent the organisation that it does. He will not go along with the convention but means to have his own way.

The Bill is really saying, "No negotiation about teachers' wages—only dictatorship." That is extremely sad for everyone connected with education—including parents, children and governors—many of whom are being given all sorts of new duties that will frighten them away. Governors will be lost, because much of the work now undertaken by local education authorities will have to be done by governors.

The Secretary of State spoke about the individual deciding his own wage, but there are no negotiations under the present system. Instead, a head can tell a teacher the wage that he will receive. Heads will be able to offer inducements—some have already done so—for teachers to opt out of national negotiations in favour of personal and private negotiations. There will then be no need for trade unions or local education authorities. in their place will be something in which the Conservative party profoundly believes—a system whereby a big stick is waved in the faces of ordinary working people, who will be told that they will receive a wage that has already been decided, with no question of any negotiation.

The ILO points out that three major aspects of the Bill violate the convention agreed by the United Nations and to which the Government were a signatory. First is the Secretary of State's power to reject any negotiated settlement with which he disagrees and to impose his own. Secondly, there is the proposal to establish a permanent body similar to the existing interim advisory committee. The third violation is the provision enabling individual LEAs and grant-maintained schools to opt out of national negotiations without establishing local negotiating machinery. Teaching staff will be left to negotiate for themselves, without any strength behind them.

This is the second time that the ILO has found the Government in breach of international law. The Government mean to force through their legislation, knowing that it violates the rules by which every other European nation abides. It is diktat rather than negotiation, which violates not only the convention that has the support of the ILO and the United Nations but the beliefs of every other European nation.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: One of the claims often made by teachers' unions is that their members earn less than a London secretary. If there is one group of employees who are not unionised it is London secretaries, who are in a free market in negotiating their salaries. Does not the hon. Gentleman see a contradiction in the unions saying that teachers do not earn as much as London secretaries, when the latter are not unionised?

Mr. Flannery: The hon. Gentleman has some kind of vendetta against unions. That is nothing strange, because I see in their places a number of Conservative Members who share that view. However, when a complaint about the Bill was lodged with the ILO, it came not just from a union but from the World Confederation of Organs of the Teaching Profession throughout the World. The hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) might try to laugh that out of existence, but the Government refuse to acknowledge that education is steadily moving into crisis. That will undoubtedly help to defeat the Government, but our children are suffering in the process.

Schools are tumbling down around our ears for lack of money, and parents are worried sick about their children's education. Meanwhile, the Government have siphoned off more than £400 million this year to private education, and they will give another £200 million over the next couple of years—making a total of about £625 million of public money going into the assisted places scheme and city technology colleges.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Does my hon. Friend agree that, although the Tories were jeering about the International Labour Organisation—which is affiliated to the United Nations, as he said—they have a different view when the Prime Minister supports the UN's attitude towards Iraq? Then they display complete and almost abject loyalty to it. However, if it does not suit them—almost within the same breath—they sneer at the UN and its affiliated bodies, as they have done tonight.

Mr. Flannery: I think that every hon. Member in the Chamber will recognise the truth of what my hon. Friend has just said. Tory Members choose what is acceptable to them about the United Nations and UNESCO, but are against anything they do with which they disagree, or which costs money. At the same time, they are taking

[Mr. Flannery]

money from our children and giving it to private education. As they know, our children are suffering. Teachers are working harder than ever and are maligned by the Conservative party, and it is no use Tory Members denying it.

The convention which I mentioned and to which the Government have agreed, was formulated to protect citizens from abuse of power. Conservative Members are against UN conventions, signed by the Conservative party, which aim to protect citizens from the abuse of power.

The Government will give the Secretary of State the right arbitrarily to abuse power and to breach an international law that the Government have already signed, by passing the Bill. I do not think that any Conservative Members realise that.

I bet that no Conservative Member has the ILO report on the Bill, which is fundamental, or has read it. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Pembroke is muttering something—if only I could hear it.

The ILO refers to the legislation as

"fatally flawed because . . . the parties lack the freedom to strike their own bargain on their own terms".

It also points out that local authorities and schools that opt out of national negotiations would be obliged only to consult, rather than to negotiate with, their teachers. The ILO report continues by telling the Government to frame their legislation differently, so that it

"respects the right of the parties to the collective bargaining process to conclude, and to implement, their own agreement, and (ii) encourages and promotes the development and utilisation of collective bargaining machinery, in the manner envisaged by Article 4 of Convention No. 98"—

which they have signed. That is the problem that we now face.

The Opposition think that this faulty legislation will further disrupt our educational system in many ways—God knows, it is on the verge of major disruption and none of us wants that. We want harmony in schools. We want our children to be in smaller classes. We want teachers to have reasonable wages, to be well trained and we want plenty of them. Practically all of that is non-existent in Britain at the moment.

Teachers' morale will sink even lower as a result of the Bill. Numerically, we are powerless to stop it and we can only argue against it to the best of our ability. Teachers will see through the trickery and the sleight of hand embodied in the Bill.

Conservative Members do not even seem to have read the Bill, never mind the report on it. With blind loyalty to their party, Conservative Members are pushing our children into large classes. State education is in the hands of people who do not send their children to state schools—most of them do not. I see that the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) is in the Chamber; I know that he sends his children to state schools, as he always boasts about it.

Conservative Members do not understand state education. They want to make money out of education. They are masters and mistresses of the tawdry philosophy of the market, and they want to bring it into the classroom. Our children will be in bigger classes and will not have enough teachers. Conservative Members will then start to tell us all sorts of fables about the situation and will say that it does not exist.

The Secretary of State knows very little education. I know that he is new. He is like a freshe job. He proved very clever at ruining the nationa service—wards have been closed. Now it will be no a case of wards and hospitals closing. In addition, will close and classrooms will have far too many in them. The competition that Conservatives w mean that a school in an area where working pe doing the best for their children will not come up expectations, another school in a posher area will to expectations and the first school will close.

What will the Conservatives do with all the schools, when the schools that they make into com successes are full? We have experienced this——

Mr. Nicholas Bennett *rose*——

Mr. Flannery: Not again, please. God bless yo honour, you are very kind.

Conservative Members do not understand wh are doing with our education system, which has be up during the best part of 150 years—*[Laughter.]* good laughing about it.

Whoever becomes the Tory leader—we bothered who—will have to face the cold grey political dawn, a languishing education system, a health service that is in great difficulties, and all t things that Conservative Members laugh about bu know about.

More and more teachers will opt out of the pro The Secretary of State told us that the number o applying to become teachers had increased. H Madam Deputy Speaker, when he opens his practically anything can come out—he says anyth tries to make the situation look beautiful but anyo visits schools or who talks to parents or governor that they are at their wits' end to know what to do Government's depredations on the education Children will suffer, schools will suffer, and we s even further behind competing nations.

What should the Government do? I would te but they do not need telling. They know what the to do, but are consciously refusing to do it. T answer is to restore free negotiating rights—six teachers' unions negotiating with their employers they have come to an agreement, they will be able the Secretary of State knowing that, more than will be ratified. If he does not want to ratify it, discuss with them what he thinks is wrong.

What is fundamental—this is what mak Conservatives choke on what they ought to do—i more money to education. It is the only way. Mor means more teachers, smaller classes, better schoo equipment and more books. It means all the things now need in our education system. Conservative M call it throwing money at a problem, as if they ev money at our problems. They throw money only own problems, such as Guinness. I have just outl only answer. There is no other way. This tawdr another statement to the general public t Conservatives will not change one iota, but will in the wretched manner in which they have co themselves thus far.

5.58 pm

Mr. James Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): Towards the end of his speech, the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) referred to the need for more money. I wonder if he has noted an interesting omission from the list of supporters of the Opposition amendment. If he looks at the Order Paper, he will see that there is no shadow Treasury spokesman in the list. That is a clear sign of just how much Opposition Members care about our children's education. Opposition Members say that they will make improvements only as resources allow, as we have heard on so many occasions. It is clear from that omission that resources will not be allowed.

The hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) said that, during a five-year period, one in three teachers leaves the profession. At first sight that seems a fairly damning statistic, but one must understand that there are many women in the teaching profession who will get married and have children. Therefore, it is natural that a number of people should leave the profession. As we all know, they will return when their families start to grow up. Therefore, I do not share the hon. Gentleman's feelings of gloom.

I welcome the Bill, because I believe that, over time, it will help to raise teacher morale. For some years, teachers have, with some strength, complained about the loss of their negotiating rights. The Bill remedies that and, after a reasonable period of reflection, it will be welcomed by teachers, heads and others in the profession. There have been substantial consultations between the Government and teacher unions as well as with the employers—the local education authorities.

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): Consultation is not simply a matter of arranging to hear the views of another party. Consultation fails miserably when Governments fail to listen. I hope that the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) agrees that consultation should be meaningful and should result in a recognition of real concerns and some effort being made to meet them.

Mr. Pawsey: I am pleased that I gave way to the hon. Gentleman, because I can tell him that the Government do listen. We take on board the recommendations that are made to us by various professional bodies. One can see improvements and modifications that have taken place in various Bills as a result of some of the points made to us. For example, in the Education Reform Act 1988, we adjusted the testing of seven-year-olds. Teachers said to us, quite properly, that the testing arrangements were far too bureaucratic. We took on board the points made, and we have eased the testing requirements. That is an example of how we listen.

The Bill avoids the trap of creating son of Burnham or Burnham mark 2. It does not restore the old discredited machinery which did so much to cause dissent and divide the profession. The Bill provides for negotiations between employers and teachers under an independent chairman. The Government will not be a party to those negotiations. There will be no pre-set financial limit to the negotiations.

I acknowledge quite readily that employers will be aware of the aggregate external finance that the Government will make available for local authority expenditure, and no doubt they will reach decisions in the light of those figures. A time limit, quite properly, will be set upon the negotations and in the event of no agreement being reached by the end of the time limit, something similar to the existing independent advisory committee will come into play and the Government will receive recommendations from that body.

I have made it clear in the House over a number of years that teaching is an important and honourable profession. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] I am pleased that my hon. Friends acknowledge that. Perhaps there is some significance in the fact that it was not acknowledged by Opposition Members. Perhaps they do not see the teaching profession in that way. I want teacher remuneration to reflect the true importance of the profession.

As I have said previously, teachers are not always their own best advocates. We can recall the days of action which resulted in the nation's children being sent home from school I think that we all agree that that was disgraceful, and that there can be no justification for such action. Even this year, we saw a leader of a major trade union being shouted down by his own union militants. That is not a good augury. I hope that from the legislation will emerge a better understanding and greater co-operation between teacher and legislator, for the good of the nation's children.

I said earlier that I am anxious to see teachers better remunerated. This measure will be one of the ways in which we might achieve that laudable aim.

An article in the *Daily Mail* referring to the education service gives the number of teachers and the number in support services. The figures suggest that, out of any 10 people on a local education authority payroll, only about six are teaching children. If that figure is true, the profession is out of balance. This matter has considerable relevance to the debate. It is a truism that one can only spend a pound once. One may spend it on either support staff or teachers. I should like to see much greater funding being made available for teachers and less for support staff. Funding for pay increases exists but it needs to find its way to the teachers in the classroom.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: There are many different sorts of non-teaching staff. Some of them within classrooms provide support for those with special needs or help the teachers when they have to cover other work in the classroom. I assume that the hon. Member does not think that such special support should be cut.

Mr. Pawsey: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman, because that enables me to refer in greater detail to the article in the *Daily Mail*. The article divides non-teaching staff, saying that 10 per cent. are involved in central administration, 20 per cent. in schools administration and 10 per cent. in miscellaneous duties.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Does the hon. Gentleman wish to raise a point with me?

Mr. Douglas: The hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) is reading figures from a newspaper. Is that in order?

Madam Deputy Speaker: It is perfectly in order for the hon. Gentleman to quote from any publication, and that is what he is doing.

Mr. Pawsey: I had finished the quotation. I believe that it provides the answer for the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor). It underlines my point that we should be making resources available for those who teach. Teachers require

[Mr. Pawsey]

the extra money, not the bureaucrats or the others in shire hall or wherever. The money should find its way to those who teach; I hope that hon. Members will not disagree with that.

Ms. Hilary Armstrong (Durham, North-West) *rose*——

Mr. Pawsey: Perhaps the hon. Lady disagrees.

Ms. Armstrong: I wonder whether the hon. Gentleman would care to turn his attention to the increased number of bureaucrats at the Department of Education and Science. My understanding is that, in the past two years, that number has risen considerably, far more than in any other section of education.

Mr. Pawsey: One of the hon. Lady's hon. Friends expressed concern about the likely activities of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State. He said that he would be likely to cut the numbers involved. The hon. Lady cannot have it both ways. Either it is good to reduce numbers or it is not. I think that we have probably got it right at the Department of Education and Science.

It is interesting that the Association of County Councils said that it welcomed the proposals in the Queen's Speech to introduce an early Bill to establish permanent negotiating arrangements covering teachers' pay. It offers a general welcome to the proposed legislation and supports the restoration of direct employer-employee pay bargaining.

That brings me to a point that incurred the displeasure of the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery). I support the view that local education authorities should be allowed to negotiate rates of pay for their own teaching staff. That point was well made by my hon. Friend the Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn) in his memorable speech. I know that this arrangement is unpopular with the trade unions. Their argument is that it will not increase the number of teachers. That argument was developed by the hon. Member for Blackburn. He said that, if one authority chooses to pay more money, teachers will be attracted to it from neighbouring authorities. I understand the argument, but I do not agree with it. When enacted, the Bill will encourage teachers who have left the profession to return to it.

The National Union of Teachers says that 360,000 teachers have left the teaching profession. That suggests that there is a remarkably large reservoir of teachers whom we might reach. The Bill is one way to do that; it may bring more teachers back into the profession. That would answer the shortage arguments that have been advanced. The Bill may persuade women who have left the profession to have families to return to it.

The effect of this part of the Bill will be to increase the number of teachers. Again I refer to a point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Dartford: that it is interesting that there are other professions in which shortages occur. For example, no one seriously argues that there should be a flat rate for accountants. The decision about how much accountants should get paid is left to individual employers. Given their particular conditions, they pay what they think is fair. If that is right for accountants, why is it not right for teachers? If it works for accountants, why should the same argument not apply equally to teachers?

If the Bill leads to additional funds available for teachers, I shall welcome it wi The independents decide what they pay sca They have little difficulty in encouraging tea forward. I support the view that grant-main should be able to negotiate the pay of the would then be able to respond much more weakness in their teaching forces. If that enc schools to apply for grant-maintained stat welcome it absolutely.

I said earlier that one of the effects of the increase the number of teachers. I am a teacher unions believe that the teaching prof of about 10,000 teachers. That conflicts stro Department's vacancy survey in Septembe shows that 24,000 posts were filled during th 3 September, only 1,400 posts were n interesting fact is that only three of the 104 l authorities reported a larger number of September 1990, than in January of this ye

During the past 11 years, this Admini introduced a number of substantial reforms truly effective, however, only if they are sup majority of the nation's teachers. The majo Kingdom teachers are dedicated to their pro the children in their charge. This measure which we can show our support for teach more money towards them.

6.13 pm

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): To ju happened last Thursday, it seems always to of the Liberal Democrats to be interr important announcement. The fact that the leadership ballot is about to be made allows our amendment. We submit that the deba delayed for seven days. Reference has alrea to the impact that a different leader of the party may have on the Bill. All the conte leadership of the Conservative party announcements that could have an impact o of the Bill.

Most significantly, the right hon. Memb (Mr. Heseltine) has suggested that education control should be centralised. If he were to that suggestion, there would be no point negotiating machinery that involves loc authorities and the teacher unions. In tha education authorities would not perform role. It would be more relevant to have a r Government level.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer sugge should be a separate review of teachers' pay. to conflict with the basis of the Bill. All t contenders have suggested that there should local government finance. That would lead over the opting-out proposals. One of the diff the local pay determination proposals put fo Government is that the structure of local finance does not provide the required flexib sense of local pay determination.

The Bill is based on the premise that the local education authority funding. Howev doubt. There appears to be a conflict, becaus

on which the Bill has been drafted. There are many reasons, therefore, on that score alone, for saying that the Bill ought not to be debated today.

Another reason has been revealed more fully in the debate than I expected. It has become apparent that insufficient documents have been published dealing with the impact of local pay determination on teachers and on local authority finance. The Government have not explained why they are doing this and why they think that it will work. When I asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science about the Department's research, he told the House that he believed that no research had taken place on the subject. He also said that he did not believe that research would have been valid.

It is extraordinary that the Government should embark on the adventure of local pay determination without having tried to determine what the effect is likely to be on teachers' pay, teacher supply, the interaction between different local authorities and in particular the impact of richer authorities—many of them urban authorities—pushing up teacher pay levels, to the disadvantage of smaller and poorer authorities in rural areas. That is surprising, given the number of Conservative Members who represent, as I do, rural areas. I should have expected them already to be aware of the fear in rural areas about the impact of richer authorities upon smaller ones. For a variety of reasons, it is most disadvantageous that the Bill is being debated today.

Education has been labelled by all parties and all the candidates for the leadership of the Conservative party as a priority for the 1990s. It is a key issue upon which the general election is likely to be fought. It is right that that should be so. Public confidence in the Government's commitment to education is at a very low ebb. The Government's duty is to show that they are prepared to tackle the problem constructively. We have had plenty of legislation from the Government. The problem has been the lack of funding to back it up, the speed of change, poor preparation and an environment in which teachers do not trust the Government and in which schools have not the resources to cope with the demands placed on them.

The Bill cannot be accused of speed of change. We have been waiting far too long for the restoration of proper teacher pay machinery. It was suggested in December 1989 that a new structure would be in place by now but, as Liberal Democrats predicted, the present interim advisory committee has had to be extended for a further year.

Part of the reason for the low morale in the profession must be that continued uncertainty and teachers' lack of involvement in the settlement of pay and conditions. I say that with some knowledge, because I have visited more than 60 schools and talked to teachers, and that was one of the subjects that they raised. Although the Bill is overdue, and although I have considerable concerns about its details, we shall not oppose its Second Reading, not because we believe that it is adequate—we shall be looking for specific changes—but because we do not want to hold up the reintroduction of the pay machinery for teachers. I am sure that the Minister would not expect us to agree with all the Bill's provisions, but we do not believe that there would be any advantage in seeking to throw it out and to hold up for perhaps another year the introduction of negotiating machinery.

The background for my concern is teacher supply and morale. Much reference has been made to supply problems. The May 1990 report of the Select Committee on Education, Science and Arts on teacher su highlighted those problems and called for the restora of negotiating rights as soon as possible. That would to restore the status of teaching as a career, because si putting in place the machinery will not solve the su problem. As the most basic economist knows, part o problem is that pay is not sufficiently high to attrac supply, and that is particularly so in certain areas. figures have been given already, but it is extraordinary that the Government, who claim econ credibility, cannot apparently accept that simple poi

It is extraordinary to listen to Conservative Mem debate that subject. They argue that the teacher sho does not result from pay being too low, but it is also case—*[Interruption.]* Some news might be coming.

Mr. Dennis Turner (Wolverhampton, South-East): Chancellor missed by two votes—third ballot coming

Mr. Taylor: If that is so, the question of who will b leader of the Conservative party remains unresolved. Chancellor has missed taking the leadership of the p by two votes. There will be a third ballot and the pre uncertainty will continue, not least on the future of Bill.

The point that I was seeking to make is that it is extraordinary—

Mr. Cryer: On a point of order, Madam De Speaker. As you know, a competition has been going this place for some time, in which the right hon. Me for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) got only 131 votes, Chancellor of the Exchequer 185 and the For Secretary 56. My point of order is that technically, understand it, that means a third ballot. Have you rece a statement from the Prime Minister about the candid being prevented from using Government facilities f party political matter? That is very important, because taxpayer does not want to finance these quarrels in Tory party.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I seem to have been this before—rather like last week. The hon. Member Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) is a little late this wee giving us the result, which we already know. I have ha message from the Prime Minister or from any o member of the Government. The hon. Member for T (Mr. Taylor) has the Floor.

Mr. Taylor: I am delighted that I got there first.

The point that I am trying to make is that Conserva Members, having denied the problem, argued that l pay determination, which would allow flexibility increase pay in certain cases, would solve the proble teacher supply. They tried to face both ways at the s time.

I referred in previous debates to the problems Cornwall, which are not typical. In many ways, we ar a better position than many authorities, but there has b a decline in applications for many posts, although qua has not been perceptibly affected. There has been s decline in applications for primary headship. I h quoted previously from local head teachers who wrot me about the problems that they have experienced, suc the work load becoming insurmountable, people be tired, under extreme stress and losing much enthusia One head teacher said:

[Mr. Taylor]

"I have a good many years left to give to education, but my enthusiasm for teaching cannot go on indefinitely".

Another wrote:

"Morale in my school is at an all-time low and deteriorating."

Four teachers wrote to me about the problems of morale in their schools, and subsequent to writing to me, two have withdrawn from the profession. They have acted on the problems that they highlighted. *[Interruption.]* I want to keep the Chamber informed. I understand that the former Defence Secretary, the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine), is not continuing.

Madame Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman might continue with the proposed legislation before us. If hon. Members are interested, the news is awaiting them outside—or they can approach the Chair.

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I do not wish to intervene in the debate, but in the light of the developments, is it possible to arrange, at the earlier possible moment, for a statement to be made? We have been clearly led to believe that there is a prospect of change to the poll tax. If there is to be a change of leadership, may we have the earliest possible statement on what one hopes will be plans for the abolition of the poll tax?

Madam Deputy Speaker: If an application for a statement is made to Mr. Speaker, he will ensure that it is dealt with as early as possible.

Mr. Taylor: I hope that you will accept, Madam Deputy Speaker, that this is not the easiest speech to make.

Madam Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman is doing very well in very difficult circumstances. Perhaps the House would show a little tolerance and allow him to make his case.

Mr. Taylor: Naturally, Madam Deputy Speaker, you are allowing me to do so.

The Bill will do little to tackle the morale problem, which is crucial to the supply crisis, not least because teachers are too sceptical about the Conservative party's commitment to teachers to believe that the new pay machinery will lead to better pay. They have reasons for expressing those doubts. First, to correct that problem, the Bill should have included a commitment to a general teaching council, which could do much to put right many of the problems within the profession, not least the recognition of the professionalism of teachers.

Secondly, we cannot talk pay unless we talk quality. Morale would be given a boost if the quality and contribution of good teachers were recognised, and for that, among other things, we need a nationally funded framework of teacher appraisal. I hope that the Minister will explain the Secretary of State's position on appraisal. The previous Secretary of State had decided not to implement it on the grounds of cost. *The Times* suggested that the present Secretary of State is planning to introduce compulsory teacher appraisal, but without paying the cost. Will the Minister confirm that? It is despicable that that burden should be placed on local authorities.

It is sad for continuity of policy when major decisions such as this appear to be subject not to the advice of those who know but to the whim of passing Secretaries of State for Education and Science. If the Secretary of S on in a subsequent reshuffle, can we expect change of approach on appraisal? The issue is mess. Low morale should come as no surpris

I have some points of specific concern. I h dealt in some measure with the opt-out provisi lack of explanation about their effects. Those are the Bill's major flaw. On the face of it purpose is to establish a national system of nego the opt-out provisions appear to run entirely that. If the Secretary of State was right when he would like all schools ultimately to opt national negotiations, it would appear that w offered a false prospectus and that this is negotiating procedure. It is an interim pay procedure while the Government wait for all t GMSs to opt out.

If the Government provide for LEAs to op does not invite great confidence in the negotiations. As I said, there is no documentat case, the IAC has only just introduced greate for local pay variations within a national Surely that should be given a chance to work that we can gain some idea of its impact before much bigger step.

Opting out appears to result in more proble areas and schools. Deprived areas could suffer it. There will be greater regional variations, at the local government finance system as it no although things would be different if there flexibility. It is peculiar that, on the one Government are trying to continue their reig over teachers' pay and conditions nationally other, they are allowing an under-the-door opt- to operate which could leave Ministers with problems over which they say they now need control. Despite their protestations to the con will not have that control.

The advisory committee could have a stro play, but not if that role is as restricted as Minis Two points stand out. First, if reference i negotiations, even if they were not completed, t be a requirement to start from the stage reach negotiations, rather than from a blank shee Secondly, we are told that the advisory commi will be set entirely by the Secretary of State. that committee be able to look at wider issues, supply of teachers and their pay and condition

The advisory committee could make gene mendations about education problems without having been directed by the Secretary of Stat impossible to imagine that the Secretary of Sta want to hear the kind of advice that is forthco an independent advisory committee, any more wanted to hear some of the IAC's advice. Thi Secretary of State did not accept its recommen full, and implementation was phased in. The sta for this machinery will therefore be substanti than it needs to be.

That is the Liberal Democrats' position on t Government will get our support, albeit reservations. We shall certainly not continue th unless the matters that I have addressed are de Committee and on Report.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I waited respectfully until the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) finished his speech rather than interject on a Member as I did last week. Although we have had the result of the ballot for the Conservative party leadership, we may be in a state of suspended animation. My understanding is that we have a Prime Minister-in-waiting and that the Chancellor of the Exchequer will become Prime Minister.

I apologise for intervening. I know that this Bill applies solely to English and Welsh Members, but the impact of what has happened outside the Chamber is of enormous importance to the people of Scotland. More than 1 million warrants have been issued by local authorities, the majority by Labour authorities. We are in the position——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. I find it difficult to know what the point of order for the Chair is.

Mr. Douglas: Let me briefly develop my point of order. Mr. Deputy Speaker. Those warrants were issued by local authorities on the basis of a law, but there is no majority in the House to enforce that law. If the poll tax issue were put before the House, the legislation would not get a vote. People like me are being pursued——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I cannot allow the hon. Member to make a speech in the middle of a debate. If he has a point of order for the Chair, I shall deal with it.

Mr. Douglas: The Prime Minister-in-waiting should come immediately to the House to explain the position and to state clearly that no one, particularly in Scotland, will be put in jeopardy. That law which is being applied by local authorities has no support anywhere in the House. If it is enforced, the law will be brought into disrepute.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: No doubt the House of Commons will deal with these matters in the coming days in the appropriate manner.

6.36 pm

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): I should like, as one of the Members for Barnet, on behalf of myself, my hon. Friends the Members for Chipping Barnet (Mr. Chapman) and for Hendon, North (Mr. Gorst) and all the people of Barnet, to thank my right hon. Friend the Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher) for all the work that she did for the London borough of Barnet and for the distinction that she brought to the borough over a long period. We in the borough are glad that my right hon. Friend made it clear this afternoon that she would stay in the House as a Back Bencher, working for the people of Barnet as she has done since 1959. I assure the House that there was great sadness throughout the borough last Thursday. As someone said to me at church on Sunday, it was as if a family funeral had taken place.

As one who voted for my right hon. Friend the Member for Huntingdon (Mr. Major), I should like to say how much I welcome the result of the ballot which, I understand, was declared in Room 14 a few minutes ago. My right hon. Friend has a breadth of experience in the Treasury, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Department of Social Security, which will make him an excellent Prime Minister.

I said at the beginning of my speech that I was speaking on behalf of the residents of the London borough of Barnet. Of course, I am proud to represent a Ba constituency. The House must remember that borough has the best examination results of any l authority in England. Every day, 2,000 pupils leave socialist paradise of Brent to be educated in Ba because they recognise that standards in Barnet are superior to those in the neighbouring local authoritie

It was absolute nonsense for the hon. Member Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) to say standards in education are a function of expenditure. spend far less in Barnet than, for example, the unlame Inner London education authority spent, but we get m better results. That is because we do not waste money bureaucracy, or on race advisers or sex advisers; we the emphasis on standards.

I welcome the stress that the Government have lai the pay discussions on the need for more flexibility in salary system. For far too long, education was a victi national pay scales, which ignored huge regi differences in living costs, and also ignored the fact that existence of "shortage subjects" was not an argument raising the pay of, for example, sociology teachers. must recognise that those who can teach moc languages can also become interpreters or translat while those who can teach computing can move to world of industry to work as computer operators. I am sure that there is quite such a long queue of people wan to employ sociologists as there is of people seek potential teachers of modern languages, physics, chemi or computing.

The most important aspect, however, is the h regional variation in house prices. According to Nationwide Anglia building society, the average se detached house in the Greater London area sells £106,421. In the north, the average price is £46,860. Yorkshire and Humberside, it is £54,069; in glorious, le East Anglia it is £56,550; in the north-west, it is £55,1 and in the west midlands it is £56,421.

Mr. Fatchett: What was the London price?

Mr. Marshall: The London price is £106,421. T figures were provided in the Nationwide Anglia's la survey.

Teachers know that, if they move out of London, t can buy much better houses and enjoy a much be standard of living. It is not unknown for teach occupying positions of responsibility in the Lond borough of Barnet to decide to sell up and move to north. They are willing to accept positions that do necessarily carry the same responsibility, and even become supply teachers, because they know that eventual result of the equation will be in their favour.

There is no doubt that the current London weight allowances are entirely inadequate. I am told by Library that the monthly post-tax cost of a £30,0 repayment mortgage is £269·70 a month, while monthly net cost for a London teacher who must take a £60,000 mortgage is £675. That is a monthly difference about £405, or £4,863 annually. The inner Lond weighting allowance is £1,500, with a potential discreti ary addition of £750—perhaps £2,250 a year, or £1,7 after tax. The allowances simply do not take account of huge difference between housing costs in the south-e and those elsewhere, or of the other high costs that involved.

[Mr. Marshall]

There is a further illogicality in the relationship between inner and outer London allowances. Outer London teachers receive allowances of only £984, which is not nearly enough to cover the huge extra housing costs that they incur. Then there is the complete anomaly of teachers in Barnet being paid less than those in Brent, Haringey, Merton and Ealing. How can that encourage recruitment in Barnet? Teachers know that they need only pop over the border to Brent to receive perhaps another £1,266 a year; alternatively, they can go to the people's republic of Haringey—although I can see why some may not wish to do so—and receive the same amount. It is a crazy system, and the sooner that local authorities are allowed to opt out and receive localised pay rates that take account of localised costs and the localised labour market, the better the position will be.

Listening to the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw), one sensed that the gramophone needle had stuck in a groove. The hon. Gentleman ought to be told that a speech need not be interminable to be immortal. He got it entirely wrong when he said that opting out would divide the teaching profession; let me say to him and to the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) that the present system does that. There is a north-south divide, which means that teachers in the north are, in real terms, enjoying much better living standards than those in the south. That can only aggravate the problem in the south, and cause significant localised shortages in the near term, unless the Bill is passed.

Certain individuals have suggested that teachers' salaries should be paid centrally, by the Exchequer—*[Interruption.]* The notes are here; the speech will be delivered.

I believe that that would be a retrograde step—and I wrote that before the holding of today's ballot. The central payment of teachers' salaries would mean more central control. We cannot operate a system whereby spending decisions are made locally and then financed centrally: that is a recipe for inefficiency and high spending. Central payment must mean central control.

The hon. Member for Durham, North-West (Ms. Armstrong) spoke of the extent of bureaucracy in the DES. Let me warn the House that, if teachers' salaries are ever paid centrally, that bureaucracy will multiply by a factor of four, five or six. I do not want to see the DES telling the London borough of Barnet how many teachers it should have in each school, but that would be the inevitable result of such a system.

Various comments have been made about the status of teachers. I pay tribute to their work, especially in local authority schools: I am sorry that the hon. Member for Hillsborough is not present to hear me say—as I am proud to—that both my children are being educated in such schools. I believe that our schools in Barnet are very good, and I am pleased to be able to send my sons to two of them. I have great admiration for teachers—and, indeed, a great deal of sympathy; anyone who has to look after my sons for eight hours a day is ever deserving of sympathy, and of a good salary.

Status, however, is something that teachers themselves must play a part in achieving. We in Barnet remember all the one-day strikes in the mid-1980s. We remember that the teachers' unions decided to concentrate on the borough because it was represented by the
What a terrible situation: young children
as pawns in a political game by a trade u
the politics not of a profession, but of a b
are more akin to those of Arthur Scargill
a profession seeking public recognition.
unions want to be recognised as member
they should behave as such, rather than be
boys.

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: Will the hon.
way?

Mr. Marshall: Is the hon. Gentleman t
intelligent comment? If so, I shall give w

Mr. Campbell: The Tory party,
Government, should let the teachers
increase for which they have been asking
should treat teachers like professionals, a
money that they asking for.

Mr. Marshall: The hon. Gentleman's
to be, "Give him the money, Barney," wh
of Wilfred Pickles. It is rather rum to
representative of a party that, for six
teachers' pay to go up by 6 per cen
compared with the 30 per cent. rise in real
Government. This Government have bee
more pay; the previous Labour Governm
absurd for the hon. Gentleman to
hypocritical comment.

In a debate on teachers' pay, one m
quality of teaching in our schools. Opp
have made some remarkable comment
about the schools that they want to see. T
for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) wh
has demonstrated his interest in educatio
for most of the debate, said that a new
college was being set up in Nottingham
the Government for setting up that ne
would benefit his constitutents. How ma
would come to the House to con
Government were funding a new
constituency? If the hon. Gentleman rea
the school, I beseech my hon. Friend the
the money away from Nottingham and to
where we should say, "Thank you very

Opposition Members do not believe
diversity and choice in education. They
CTCs although they are nice, new sc
popular with teachers and with pupils, a
education that is relevant to the needs
would befall those schools under a Labo
Closure.

A Labour Government would get rid
grammar schools because it is a long-l
Labour party that grammar schools are
would get rid of them despite the fact tha
excellent academic achievements, and
authorities and the parents want to kee
regained power, the Labour party would
grant-maintained schools, which are d
job.

I must tell the Labour party that, wh
Friend the Leader of the House, who w
of State for Education and Science, visite

which was the first grant-maintained school in London, a member of the teaching staff approached him. He said, "Secretary of State, I must say to you that I am a member of the Labour party." I wondered what would happen next. The teacher then said, "I must also tell you, Secretary of State, that the best thing that has happened to this school is it becoming a grant-maintained school." I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister, who has recently visited that school, will confirm that it is a first-rate school. Three years ago, it was heavily undersubscribed; now, as a grant-maintained school, it is fully subscribed. The gauleiters of the Opposition say that such schools should not be allowed to continue.

The Labour party boasts that it would abolish the assisted places scheme. What does the assisted places scheme do? It allows bright children whose parents have a low income to go to independent schools. The Labour party would attack bright children from low-income families, and that is how it would appeal to social groups C2, D and E. The Labour party would tell such families that their children could not go to public schools under the assisted places scheme.

The Labour party wants only to get rid of the schools that are popular and successful, and that have high standards, in the names of mediocrity and of socialism. Labour Members want to become the Henry Fords of education and to be able to say, "You can go to any school provided it is the local area comprehensive school." I believe in parental choice, and in quality and standards in education. The Government and the Bill are the only means by which to ensure that that choice and those standards are maintained.

6.53 pm

Mr. Gerry Steinberg (City of Durham): I will try to keep to the subject of the debate—unlike the previous speaker, the hon. Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall), who has spoken about anything but the Bill.

In this Chamber two weeks ago, I welcomed the Government's proposal for a Bill to give back negotiating rights to teachers. However, I also told the House that I suspected that there would be a sting in the tail, and I think that my hunch was about right. I had hoped that the Bill would finally establish acceptable and permanent negotiating arrangements for teachers' pay, duties and conditions of service. Yet again, the Government have failed to make any significant moves towards the introduction of a system that is satisfactory both to the teachers and to their employers, and which could replace the supposedly temporary system established by the Teachers' Pay and Conditions Act 1987.

There is now an acute shortage of teachers. Despite what the Secretary of State and Conservative Members say, it is a direct result, first, of the erosion of pay caused by the absence of free, national-level collective bargaining since 1987; secondly, of the vastly increased burden of unrewarded work and responsibility, which are the consequences of changes to the teaching service structure; and, thirdly, of low morale among teachers, which is the consequence of the other two factors.

I went for a cup of tea 20 minutes ago, having been here since 2.30 pm, and I picked up the *Evening Standard*. Lo and behold, the first article in the *Evening Standard* that I read was headlined, "'1600 teachers leave London'". The article continued:

"London's teacher shortage crisis is getting worse.

A new survey claims nearly 1600 staff have left sc London in the past two months, and the problem is s hitting the education of tens of thousands of pupils.

And according to the Thames TV News repo schools have not had a full-time teacher for up months.

The Department of Education declined to comm this report confirms the survey published by the Standard on 5 November disclosing that Britain's lack 10,105 staff, not the 1400 admitted by the Gov

Fed-up teachers in the survey blame poor pay status for the exodus, despite the Government's mult pound recruitment campaign."

That reiterates what the Labour party has been sa the past two, three or four years.

The proposals for new negotiating machin teachers' pay and conditions of service yet again conform to the requirements of international conv and the breach has now been compounded. Thi second time the International Labour Organisat found the Government to be in breach of internati in their handling of teachers' negotiating right 1987, the Government have imposed amended co of service on teachers, they have put cash limits o increases and they have extended the operation of t Act beyond its expected expiry date.

Teachers' pay has been deliberately depressed i years by the use of cash limits. Restricting th increase to an average for white-collar employees even restore teachers to their position of four years alone produce proper levels of pay for the professi no one say anything other than that pay is cr recruitment and to the retention of teachers, whic most important factor that we are discussing t repeat what I said to the Secretary of State some tw ago. Evidence shows that teachers are now wo compared both with the rate of inflation and wi non-manual counterparts than they were when the advisory committee was established.

In the new proposals, there are three brea conformity, as set out by the ILO. The proposal negotiation of terms and conditions between em and teachers under an independent chairman condition attached to it. The Secretary of State power to reject any negotiated settlement with w disagrees, and to impose an alternative. He has an a power of discretion even though all negotiating may agree with the recommendations.

The Bill makes nonsense of the concept negotiation by retaining almost total powe responsibility with the Secretary of State and by a the negotiating body and even the so-called a committee to be overruled. At a time of severe shortage, whatever the Secretary of State may say recruitment and retention of teachers is crucial, an morale in the profession is at an all-time low, the undermine education even more. The negotiators be left free to finalise and implement their own agre

Secondly, disagreements which are not resolved the prescribed deadline may be referred b Government to a statutory independent a committee. The establishment of a permanent body to the existing interim advisory committee is the breach of conformity. The proposed permanent a committee, like the existing body, will be obli consult the relevant parties and will be empowe make recommendations to the Secretary of State, w

[Mr. Gerry Steinberg]

retain the right to accept, modify or reject those recommendations as he sees fit. As far as I can see, that is no improvement on the present system.

Although it is true that reference to the new committee must be preceded by an attempt to resolve differences by collective bargaining, that in itself does not convert the committee phase into a process of collective bargaining. Both the negotiations and the committee phase are, as the ILO said:

"fatally flawed because in both instances the parties lack the freedom to strike their own bargain on their own terms."

It must certainly be possible to impose restrictions on the bargaining process when lengthy deadlocks ensue, but that is not to say that there should be a mechanism to infringe the autonomy of the bargaining process.

While I welcome efforts to restore direct employer-employee bargaining on pay, duties and conditions, the Government have failed to meet the requirement to put collective bargaining arrangements in place. The proposals for time-limited negotiations will serve their purpose only if the limits are not so short as to curtail productive negotiation, since that would allow the Secretary of State to exercise his overriding powers.

The third breach is represented by the provisions enabling education authorities and grant-maintained schools to opt out of national negotiations without establishing local negotiating machinery. Local education authorities or the governing bodies of publicly funded schools would be permitted to apply to the Secretary of State for permission to opt out of the national framework and to determine the pay and conditions of their teachers at a local level and at local rates. Some authorities could then conceivably pay more than others under different conditions of employment. All of this is to be done at a time of grave teacher shortages, and a glorious game of leapfrog would become the order of the day.

Teachers would be attracted to the places where pay and conditions were the best, leaving gaps that could not be filled because there would be no one left to fill them. Authorities whose teachers were attracted away could only react by increasing pay and improving conditions, thus contributing to the spiral.

Before anyone imagines that the opted-out authorities would offer all the prizes, it should be remembered that there is one back in the leapfrog game that will bring everyone down. Local authorities are required by the Government to control their spending. Where are they to raise the cash to make higher settlements than the nationally agreed figure? They will not be able to, so they will not—or, if they do, capping will follow.

The purpose of this Bill must be to keep teachers' pay low and thus continue to contribute to decline in the profession. The freedom to arrive at local settlements can only mean the freedom to arrive at low settlements, and that is not what education needs.

After opting out, all future pay and conditions settlements would be free from any control and subject only to certain restrictions on changes in pay within the first year and to the general obligation on local education authorities to consult governing bodies and teachers before implementing proposals for changes in local pay and conditions. So the Government are proposing not only that employing authorities should opt out of national collective bargaining but that they should opt out of any form of collective bargaining. This free-for-all outside a common framework may lead to overbidding, instability among teaching staff and an avoidable pay inflation, while not profiting the education service in general. That is hardly in line with the Government's obligation to promote voluntary negotiations between employers and employees.

Clause 9 allows grant-maintained schools to do their own thing. That may mean higher settlements by schools which attract additional funds. If so, the best teachers in an area could be enticed into the rich opted-out school, leaving others with the problems of replacing them. That is a device to fool people into thinking that grant-maintained means better when it does not, but we are not fooled—parents will not be fooled, and nor will teachers. The rich will be much richer while the rest will suffer.

The intake to teacher training courses is at an all-time low—*[Interruption.]*—regardless of the figures that the Department may pass in little notes to the Minister. Resignations from the profession continue in numbers that have a harmful effect on education, and the six teacher associations' survey recently revealed that the number of vacancies was at least double the Government's estimate—and it is even worse this year.

Despite the continuing trend of graduates away from teacher training, the Government persist in doing no more than tinkering at the edges. Other employers try to attract graduates with sensible starting salaries and career development plans. With such opportunities, it is no wonder that graduates are not coming into teaching.

In a profession in which low morale is widespread, the effects of measures perceived as divisive and unfair cannot be underestimated. A free-market auction of teachers held by competing authorities and governing bodies is potentially disastrous. The Government are acting contrary to the conventions that they have agreed. They must not continue to breach conventions that they have ratified and which were designed to promote and encourage voluntary negotiations to bring about mutually accepted agreement.

Without a truly independent negotiating machinery, the teaching profession will continue to degenerate. Without a large increase in salary to make teaching attractive, that degeneration will become indelible. For the sake of all our children we must now deal with the main issues—recruitment and retention of teachers. That would enhance educational standards and recognise that the nation's future is in our schools. We need a commitment to a true negotiating system, in which teachers and their employers can arrive at what is best for education.

7.7 pm

Mr. Steve Norris (Epping Forest): I extend a warm welcome to the Bill, which fulfils the long-standing obligation to replace the Burnham machinery, which was inadequate for the negotiation of teachers' pay. The Government have fulfilled that obligation in a creative way, which will in due course commend itself to the whole House and to the teaching profession. Behind the Bill lies the desire to enhance the status of teachers in the community—a desire that will be shared on both sides of the House. This is the right way to proceed.

Contrary to the opinion expressed by the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw)—I am sorry that he is not in his place now—the Education Reform Act 1988, which was so

derided during its passage by all sorts of vested interests and by the Opposition, has become, only two years into its operation, accepted on all sides as having advanced education.

I accept that there are the occasional dinosaurs on the Opposition Benches on whom any development will take a few decades to make an impact. Increasingly, those left of centre in politics in this country are beginning to realise that concepts such as attainment testing, the national curriculum and even grant-maintained schools are the germs of progress in education. I accept that we cannot starve an education service and that it would be rank hypocrisy to hide behind the argument that all was structure and resources were nothing. Neither side of the House has fallen for that argument.

Before the Education Reform Act 1988, a commitment to quality, standards and diversity was missing. Improvements in quality arose as a result of the enhancement of choice that the Education Reform Act made available.

Mr. Fatchett: When the Education Reform Bill was published, the Conservative party had a lead over the Labour party on education issues in virtually all the opinion polls. Why, two years after the enactment of the Bill, does the Labour party have a 30 per cent. lead in all opinion polls on education issues? What is the reason for that difference?

Mr. Norris: Having been told by various pollsters that my party's deficit in the polls has been wiped out by the intervention of my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine), who in a week has achieved that as well as the reform of the community charge, I am rather sceptical of reaching any conclusions from polls.

However, when the Education Reform Bill was before the House, many people in education derided the proposals from a sectional standpoint which I did not share. Since then, many of those people, perhaps rather more quietly—we can understand why—have come to recognise how much good the Education Reform Bill contained.

I want to refer to a point raised by my hon. Friends the Members for Dartford (Mr. Dunn) and for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall). They referred to clauses 8 and 9, which throw a lifeline to areas like mine. Such a lifeline has been sorely needed and I have written to my hon. Friend the Minister and many of his predecessors about it.

There is no conflict between the two interventions that I made earlier. In my constituency, the history of vacancies was made much of by Labour party representatives. They sought to fan all sorts of fears among parents, which were subsequently not realised in 1989 or this year. That was a terrible shame for parents, who naturally become disturbed when they are told, apparently by authoritative sources, that there is a prospect that their children will not be able to go to school or will be sent home from school. I received goodness knows how many letters as a result of that scare.

Fortunately, those parents were worried for nothing and they did not have to suffer that experience. That was an incredibly cynical exploitation of the perfectly valid concerns of parents. They were put under pressure in order to make a cheap political point, which frankly did not carry much weight.

In response to the interesting patois intervention by the hon. Member for City of Durham (Mr. Steinberg), it is true that we do not get enough candidates of quality on our shortlists. We often get only one candidate, and I would be the first to agree with the hon. Gentleman that that is unsatisfactory. Equally, although we have only a handful of unfilled posts, too many have not been filled by permanent staff, and I agree that that is a less than satisfactory way for children to be taught. Clearly we must look at the way in which teachers are attracted to my part of the world.

I have always thought that the logic of differential pay and geographical variations in pay is absolutely irrefutable. My hon. Friend the Member for Dartford referred to what he called a centrist newspaper entitled *The Daily Telegraph*. I recall an interesting article by Bernard Levin in what must be a left-wing rag called *The Times*. That article was about a dispute involving Post Office workers, in which local pay bargaining was the central issue.

If I recall correctly, Mr. Allan Tuffin raised that issue after it has been suggested that particular payments were being made to postmen who lived in London. He was concerned that those payments should be made available throughout the country. I recall Bernard Levin writing, in what seemed to be a perfectly logical way, that, although he felt that a trade union leader had a perfectly natural obligation to try to secure the best deal for his members —and if that meant that he could secure money for people living in less expensive parts of the country, why should he not do that?—if a postman in Grimsby was paid the same as a postman in Chelsea, either one was being overpaid, or more likely the other was being underpaid.

In what was always called "the real world"—I hate to use that expression—there cannot be the slightest doubt that living costs differ substantially around the country. It is asinine not to recognise that that will have a huge influence on the attractiveness of public sector posts.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South referred to housing costs. In my constituency, one cannot buy a one-bedroom flat for under £55,000. I was once told that mine is the second most expensive constituency in the country. My hon. Friend the Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns), who kindly assisted me in 1988 during my fraught experience of a by-election which is fast becoming a legend in this Parliament because we won it, will recall that it is considered normal that houses in my constituency cost £100,000 a bedroom once we move up the scale to ordinary three and four-bedroom houses.

Unlike many other professions, there is no particular reason why a teacher should wish to come to work in my high-cost area instead of working elsewhere. There is often a distinct reason why people gravitate to London—because that is where their head office is located, and they want promotion and larger salaries. They obviously accept that they will have to pay more for housing. One of the particular features of teaching is that a teacher can get to the top of his or her tree as easily in Northamptonshire, rural Essex or Lancashire as in central London or in the expensive part of Essex that I represent. It is doubly important that we counter a huge natural disincentive to people to come to teach in high-cost areas.

As part of the bedrock of this argument, I want to make an important point. It does not matter what salary we start with or whatever the national salary is—be it adequate or inadequate—there will still be an incentive for people to

[Mr. Norris]

move to areas where their money buys them a great deal more. We find that problem not only in teaching, but in other public sector appointments in my constituency, and I look forward to clauses 8 and 9 addressing it.

As I endeavoured to say in an intervention during the speech by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State, I hope that my local education authority will not hesitate to use the provisions of clause 8. I accept that that may mean that community charge payers have to make a greater contribution to teachers' salaries. I believe that my constituents would generally accept that that was the quid pro quo of being fortunate enough to live in one of the most expensive and wealthy districts in the country. I think that they would accept that they can afford to pay teachers enough to attract the quality of teachers that my constituents—and other hon. Members' constituents—deserve.

Mr. Steinberg: I have listened carefully to the hon. Gentleman's argument. Is he trying to say that he believes that, by giving local education authorities the right to negotiate, the difference in pay that teachers will receive will be the same as the cost involved in somebody moving from my district of the country, Durham, to the hon. Gentleman's, Epping Forest? Is he saying that the amount of extra salary they receive will compensate for the move? Does he not feel that it would be better for local authorities to be given the right or the power to finalise a system taking into account housing costs, and so give an incentive? Does the hon. Gentleman believe that local authorities will pay teachers enough to compensate for the huge difference in housing costs?

Mr. Norris: I entirely agree with the hon. Gentleman that all the scales of difference available to us understate the actual difference in housing costs—for example, between his district and mine. I do not disguise the fact that local education authorities in regions such as mine are unlikely to be able to go the whole way to compensate for differences in housing costs. That was a point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall).

Inner London weighting is set at £1,500, which, if one already had a mortgage of £30,000 and so was not eligible for more tax relief would, after tax, amount to an ability to borrow another £10,000 to put towards a more expensive house. If interest rates were at 0·5 per cent., that weighting might give £20,000 but would come nowhere near the £100,000 or so necessary to compensate for moving from the constituency of the hon. Member for City of Durham (Mr. Steinberg) to mine.

I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his concern on behalf of the electors of Epping Forest, which I shall convey to them. I invite the hon. Gentleman to come with me and see what a delightful place it is—perhaps he might contemplate the economics of such a move.

London allowances are of real concern, not just to my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South to whom I am grateful for raising the subject and so allowing my hon. Friend the Minister to see that it is not just a single constituency issue. The fringe allowance to which my constituency teachers are entitled will, from 1 July 1989, be the magnificent sum of £384. The irony is that it is a sum paid regardless of grade; it is almost insignificant in terms of its purchasing power in the context of regional costs. It is particularly galling when compared with an outer London weighting of £984—a full £600 more—and an inner London weighting of £1,500.

The reality is that teachers who live in my constituency can often travel shorter journeys to work when they happen to work in one of the London boroughs and, if that borough adds the London supplement of £750, earn more than £1,000 a year more than in my district. I accept that there will always be boundaries and that, close to metropolitan districts, those boundaries occasionally look a bit capricious. I understand that; such anomalies will always exist. I am sure that all hon. Members with experience of metropolitan constituencies know that.

I am worried that, when calculating the weighting allowance, there is an assumption that cost in a major city such as London is based on the bull's eye principle that costs are highest in the centre and become lower as one goes further out. That may be true between Belgravia and the wilds of the countryside, but it is not true for London, throughout which there are pockets of high and low cost.

When my hon. Friend the Minister considers weighting, I urge him to use a more sophisticated formula than that currently used, so that it allows for a much more general recognition of high cost where that is clearly appropriate, as it obviously is in my constituency. If we received the inner London weighting of £1,500, rather than our fringe allowances of £834, the difference would not go a quarter of the way towards compensating for the differential housing costs to which I referred.

In giving the warmest approval to the measure, I urge my right hon. and learned Friend to look with sympathy at allowances, particularly London allowances. I urge him not to impede the progress of grant-maintained schools or local authorities towards taking control of their local pay arrangements. I believe that clauses 8 and 9 throw my constituents a lifeline which is of considerable importance for the education of children in my constituency.

7.26 pm

Mr. Dennis Turner (Wolverhampton, South-East): I commend to the hon. Member for Epping Forest (Mr. Norris) the Select Committee's report on teacher shortages. It took us more than 12 months to produce the document, within which he will find a list of recommendations dealing with London and outer London allowances, housing costs, additional responsibility allowances and a range of proposals.

The Government do not seem to have taken sufficient account of that report. That certainly appeared to be the case when the Secretary of State advanced the Government's argument earlier and spoke of teacher recruitment, retention and the other major problems identified in the report, on which the ink is still not dry. For the Government to say that there has been so much progress during such a short period leaves a little doubt in my mind as to whether they are using an element of exaggeration and deceit about the present state of education.

Mr. Rupert Allason (Torbay): There may well be an element of exaggeration, but if the hon. Gentleman looks at the statistics for Devon he will see that this January there were 166 vacancies for teachers there, and in September the number had been reduced to just 16.

Mr. Turner: I am pleased to hear that information, although the same is not true across the whole country. However, like the hon. Gentleman, I am pleassed if there is an improvement in recruitment in Devon and join him in rejoicing in the fact that progress is being made.

I am saddened by this debate and by the Bill. In the Select Committee we made proposals which we thought that the Secretary of State might reject. Some Government supporters in the Select Committee expended energy on recommendations that they felt should be followed. When we learned that the former Secretary of State for Education and Science was to recommend a new pay and conditions organisation, we made clear recommendations in our Select Committee report.

I was full of hope that the Bill would contain a proper negotiating procedure for teachers. Although the interim advisory committee made sound recommendations on many matters, it has been criticised since 1987 because those recommendations were always curtailed by the Government's cash limits and could not adequately and properly respond to the teachers.

There are four basic objections to the proposed negotiating machinery. First, the proposal allows local education authorities and grant-maintained schools to opt out of national pay negotiations. In effect, they can pay teachers local rates. That is unacceptable for a national education service at any time, but at this time of crisis in the supply of teachers it is completely impracticable.

Secondly, the Secretary of State's reserve powers to override or refer back decisions of the negotiating committee are not compatible with free collective bargaining. We have heard that the International Labour Organisation and a committee of the United Nations have heavily criticised the Government for that aspect of the legislation. I do not want to go over that ground again. The machinery in the Bill is unsatisfactory for resolving disputes in the negotiating committee. It contains no provision for arbitration, and that is an important issue in all free negotiations.

The Government propose to move on from the interim advisory committee, and they should at least have carried the teachers' organisations with them. It is sad that the Government have failed miserably to satisfy the very people to whom they wanted to respond positively. The Secretary of State said that the proposals had the support of the teachers' organisations. We know that the National Union of Teachers is totally opposed to the Government's proposal for national negotiations.

Hon. Members have no doubt received from the Assistant Masters and Mistresses Association a document which states:

> "New procedures and powers in the Bill for the local determination of teachers' pay and conditions of employment are at the least ill-judged and premature, and the reserve powers accruing to the Secretary of State are so excessive as to jeopardise the success of negotiating machinery established under the Bill."

The association recommends that hon. Members oppose the Bill and ask the Government to go back to the drawing board and bring in a Bill allowing teachers free negotiations. That would take our education service forward into the 1990s and give us tranquillity and progress.

The Government should encourage everyone in education to work together to meet the needs of our communities. Even at this late stage, I ask the Minister not to run into great opposition with all the teachers' organisations even before the Bill becomes an Act. He should have another look at it and try to get legislation that everyone can work in the interests of our children and our future.

7.34 pm

Mr. Ken Hargreaves (Hyndburn): I welcome the opportunity to make a brief speech. Last December, when the motion on teachers' pay and conditions was debated, I expressed my disappointment and displeasure at the fact that it had not been possible in the three years allowed to set up a new negotiating body for teachers' pay and conditions. That regrettable delay in setting up such machinery has been to the detriment of teachers.

This morning, I attended the presentation of the national schools curriculum awards at which the chairman, Sir Geoffrey Chandler, told a large audience that teaching was the most important occupation, a fact which he said we had succeeded in disguising from ourselves for some time. I totally agree. The future of our country depends upon the quality of the education and training received by our young people, and the best quality will be provided only if teachers themselves are of the highest quality. That was acknowledged in the Green Paper, where it was recognised that the new teachers' pay determination machinery should be designed to provide settlements that pay due regard to the need to recruit, retain and motivate sufficient teachers of the right quality.

I visited almost every school in my constituency during the summer recess and I am convinced that, generally speaking, Hyndburn has high-quality teachers. My concern is that we may not retain them unless we give greater priority to education and to teachers. We should all beware of politicians who promise to spend more on everything—on the health service, on roads and on overseas aid. That is impossible, but politicians can re-order priorities, and now is the time to do so. Education and training must be at the top of our list.

Change is never easy, but teachers have coped extremely well with Government reforms in education. The reforms will prove beneficial, providing teachers do not get bogged down with administration. Those changes coincided with changes in society, which have led to less respect for people in authority. A reduction in teachers' standing in the community and their inability to negotiate their own pay settlements have caused many experienced and dedicated teachers to leave the profession.

At this morning's ceremony, I was with the head teacher, staff and pupils of Rhyddings high school, Oswaldtwistle, which won an award. Rhyddings is a fine school, but in the recent past it has lost the head of the science faculty—a teacher with 30 years' experience—a teacher who spent 15 years in the technology department, and a teacher with a similar length of service in home economics. Those are just three examples of people who have left the profession. Many of my local schools tell the same story.

The Government can do little about the changes in society, but by supporting teachers they can show that they understand, and the best possible sign of that understanding would be a substantial salary increase. this year's increases for teachers of 6·4 to 11·8 per cent., with an average of 8·3 per cent., can hardly be described as over-generous or as designed to retain let alone motivate them.

[Mr. Ken Hargreaves]

The Secretary of State said that teachers' pay had risen by 30 per cent. in real terms since 1979. But that takes no account of how other professions, which have not faced the changes and pressures faced by teachers in recent years, have fared. To allow teachers to develop personally, we must ensure that they are financially secure. That does not seem to be the case at present. If that is true for the north of England, the situation must be worse in the south where living costs are higher.

The Education Reform Act 1988 has increased the responsibilities not only of senior management but of the teachers responsible for line management. Unless we have people of high calibre at all levels, the national curriculum will not be delivered to the standards that most teachers would wish. While it is clearly essential to have an attractive commencing salary, if we are to retain the best of our teachers, we must address the problem of progression and try to prevent excellent teachers from coming out of the classroom to become part of the organisation and administration simply on financial grounds when they would prefer to stay in the classroom.

I welcome the introduction of incentive allowances to reward teachers for good classroom work or for increased responsibility. I am pleased that a further 89,000 allowances were awarded by September this year, bringing the total to 189,000 or 50 per cent. of all secondary school teachers and 40 per cent. of all primary school teachers. That is a welcome development.

I also welcome the way in which the previous Secretary of State, my right hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, South (Mr. MacGregor), constantly recognised publicly the excellent work that is done by the majority of teachers. I am sure that my right hon. and learned Friend the present Secretary of State and his Ministers will continue the practice of praising teachers in public. Such an attitude, coupled with a substantial pay increase, would do much to restore the low morale of teachers.

Teaching is a calling or a vocation but that is not a reason why teachers should not be adequately rewarded. In April, the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) said:

"Teachers will still, under a Labour Government, be less well-paid than they wish to be paid."

Fortunately for teachers, there will not be a Labour Government. The Government have clearly done more for teachers than the previous Labour Government. If we are to retain the experienced teachers to whom I referred, we have to do even better. I hope that the Bill will be a vehicle by which we can do that.

7.41 pm

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): The determination of school teachers' salaries and conditions in England and Wales and the method by which those salaries are negotiated may have some influence on the determination of salaries for teachers in Northern Ireland. The conditions and the awards that are made here have in the past tended to be rubber-stamped some weeks later in Northern Ireland—hence my interest in this legislation.

Since the abolition of the negotiating machinery for teachers' salaries in England and Wales, their salaries have been determined by the interim advisory committee within certain cash limits imposed by the Government. For the past three years, that has resulted in salary increases lower than the rate of inflation, which means that teachers' p has been cut year after year while more demands have be made on classroom teachers and principals alil Teachers' living standards will be further depressed for t fourth successive year due to the cash limit imposed on t interim advisory committee of 8·9 per cent. for the Ap 1991 salary award.

Such a policy on teachers' pay and conditions insulting to the professionals who give honourable serv and show dedication and concern for our children. V have repeatedly heard about the crisis in teacher supply it affects many areas in England and Wales. Although in Northern Ireland have no apparent shortage teachers, the evidence of low morale in the profession, lack of job satisfaction and the discontent with pay a conditions are there for those who wish to recognise signs.

Since 1980, 10 per cent. of the total teaching forc between 1,800 and 1,900 teachers out of a total of 18,5 —have retired prematurely. The number of experienc teachers over 50 years of age who are seeking premat retirement is dangerously high and could result shortages which could damage the education of children in the future unless it is controlled.

Instead of confrontations with teacher unions, Secretary of State should ensure that there is meaning consultation with teachers' representatives. T Government should be prepared to listen to the views the professionals in education who have first-ha experience and useful advice to proffer. Unfortunat that attitude does not appear to have been adopted in past.

Teachers in Northern Ireland are paid salaries sim to those of their colleagues in England and Wales. The will therefore have direct consequences on the salaries a conditions of Northern Ireland teachers. There is conc that the proposed legislation is an attempt to divide conquer, to set school against school and teacher aga teacher, and that it will result only in a further lowerin morale in an already demoralised profession.

We are very proud of the variety, choice and type school to which parents may choose to send their child in Northern Ireland and we have no intention diminishing the options that are available to parents. are also very proud of our teachers, of their dedication the service that they give. We believe passionately that t should have pay and conditions which truly reflect th worth to society.

The economic future of the whole of the Un Kingdom depends on halting the drift from teaching ensuring that there are sufficient well-qualified teach who can ensure that all our children can be educa according to their age, ability and aptitude, with pro provision being made for those with special educatio needs. Teacher shortages will disappear when pay conditions clearly demonstrate that the professior respected, is accorded its proper status and is prop remunerated.

Because of the implications of the legislation, I welc the correspondence that I have had from the gen secretary of the Ulster Teachers Union. I do not wis present the whole communication to the House because I hope that there will be another opportunit present the salient matters raised in it, but correspondence makes it patently obvious that there i

widespread agreement and that there has not been sufficient recognition of the representations made in the past by the teachers' unions.

I emphasise the concern expressed in the representation made to me—a concern which I share—that the Bill does not appear to provide for arbitration. That is a serious omission and inconsistent with the principles of free collective bargaining. As others have said, the Government interference in free collective bargaining is contrary to the convention of the International Labour Organisation to which the United Kingdom is a signatory.

While supporting a return to free collective bargaining, the general secretary of that union stated that he did not belive that clause 2 and schedule 2 provided the independence necessary in such negotiations. We are concerned that, under clause 8, which provides the opportunity to opt out, our teachers in Northern Ireland, where salaries and wages are already low, would be further disadvantaged. Workers in Northern Ireland receive the lowest average salaries and wages of any region of the United Kingdom. That is why we see the provisions as an attempt by Government to introduce regional rates of pay, which totally deviate from the concept of equal pay for equal work. I hope that there will be further consideration before the Bill reaches the statute book and that genuine account will be taken of the serious opinions of those whom the Government consult.

7.50 pm

Mr. David Amess (Basildon): I am delighted to be called to speak on this historic day in the life of this Parliament —a day when the Conservative party can unite behind our new Prime Minister, my right hon. Friend the Member for Huntingdon (Mr. Major). Had I been called earlier, I should have wished to pay tribute also to my right hon. Friend the outgoing Prime Minister.

I want to praise the Bill. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister, in his reply to the debate, will identify how the new negotiating machinery is preferable to the old Burnham machinery. I want to concentrate most of my remarks on grant-maintained schools. I am delighted to inform the House that Chalvedon school in my constituency is to be the first grant-maintained school in Essex. Essex is the largest education authority in the country. I pay tribute to the governors, the headmaster, the parents and the enthusiastic children who have brought this historic moment to Basildon.

Chalvedon school is already benefiting from grant-maintained status. Last night it was announced that, as a result of central funding, huge additional resources will be given to the new school. Morale has improved in only a short time, and I am sure that that will set the trend for the rest of Essex. I am especially pleased that the rules have been changed and that other schools can now apply for grant-maintained status. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will make it clear that grant-maintained status has nothing to do with opting out of the state system—on the contrary, all that it signals is a different method of funding and increased opportunities for schools that achieve that status.

I was a teacher in the early 1970s. I taught at St. John the Baptist junior mixed school, which was run by the Inner London education authority. It was a fine school. I welcome the opportunity tonight to pay tribute to all teachers, who work so hard on behalf of our children. They do a magnificent job. Most people find it difficult looking after their own children, whether two or three, let alone looking after a class of 25 or 26——

Mr. Andrew Smith (Oxford, East): Thirty-two.

Mr. Amess: I was educated in the east end of London in the London borough of Newham. We had 52 in a class. My teacher was dedicated to the extent that, at the age of five, she told my mother that I was dyslexic. I had great difficult enunciating—I could not pronounce the sounds "st" or "fr"—and for two years I went to a speech therapist. I was identified as a child with special learning difficulties, within a class of 52. Because of the Government's policies, the pupil-teacher ratio has now fallen to 19. That is excellent news.

Ms. Armstrong: I am delighted to hear that the hon. Gentleman had access to a speech therapist at the age of five. Is he aware that that is exactly the sort of provision that we want for every child, and at an early stage? There is enormous difficulty for children with special needs gaining access to specialists. This afternoon, Conservative Members have attacked the authorities that are retaining and supporting speech therapists and other non-teaching staff to meet special needs through central pools. Will the hon. Gentleman join me in saying that local authorities should be providing those opportunities for children with special needs?

Mr. Amess: The hon. Member for Doncaster will note that I am an enthusiast about all that speech therapists can do——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will not drag me into the debate—I am the hon. Member for Doncaster.

Mr. Amess: I am sorry, Mr. Deputy Speaker; I meant the hon. Member for Durham, North-West (Ms. Armstrong). I am sure that she will accept that there is a substantial cost to her proposals.

The Government should be congratulated on the previous education Bill and on the testing that is being introduced, which will make it much easier to identify, at an early age, the children with special needs. For 18 months, I was responsible for helping children with special learning difficulties, so I know how tough it is. I recognise that there is a substantial cost to the provision of additional teaching services. I believe that the Bill will give teachers great pleasure when they are talking about their pay and conditions. However, on this historic occasion it would be wrong not to take into account the economic position.

Of course we need more money for education, for the health service, for highways and works, and so on—but that is the whole point about the failings of Labour party policy. It never identifies where the money will come from. The Government's policy of trying to reduce inflation and interest rates will eventually result in far greater resources being available for education—in particular, for speech therapists—so that children with learning difficulties can be identified at an early age.

I welcome the opportunity to pay tribute to all my schools in Basildon. I visit every one of them during the year. We have 38 educational establishments—infant schools, junior schools, seven secondary schools and a college of further education. They are absolutely

[Mr. Amess]

magnificent. I am delighted to tell hon. Members that during the eight years that I have been the Member of Parliament, education standards in Basildon have improved. That would not have been possible without the determination of the teaching staff. That is why I say again that the Bill will considerably improve morale within the teaching profession, and I hope that the House will give it a Second Reading.

Although I was educated in a class of 52, there was no doubt about the dedication and the commitment of the teachers. Who else would have worked in Victorian buildings, with children sitting at old-fashioned desks in cold conditions? Who else would have been as dedicated as those teachers, who were much more poorly paid than the teachers of today?

I am delighted to say that because of Government initiatives, education in Basildon has improved considerably. More of our young people now go on to take full advantage of the opportunities of higher education. Essex county council recently decided to reorganise education in Basildon and, in future, our seven secondary schools will not have sixth forms; instead, their young people will be sent to the college of further education. I was not entirely enthusiastic when Essex county council made that announcement, but having visited the college to see at first hand the magnificent conditions and facilities that will be available there to young people, I have no doubt that they will receive a very good education when they attend our sixth form college.

I pay tribute also to our education team, who have enthusiastically taken up the policy that we presented to the public in our 1987 election manifesto. The difference between our party and Labour is that we do not look for short-term popularity but set out our policies before the general public and ask them to be judged accordingly.

In 1987, Conservative party policies—particularly those on education—received massive public endorsement, and we were returned with a majority of more than 100 seats. Following tonight's historic events, and given the Leader of the Opposition's statement that he will fight the next general election with education as a first priority, we welcome the battle that is to come.

We welcome the decision that our party has taken tonight. One can see from the faces of my right hon. and hon. Friends that they are very happy, and one can see from the faces of Labour Members that they are absolutely distraught and full of despair. They are very worried, because they know in their heart of hearts that in choosing a successor to my right hon. Friend the Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher), we have made ours the best party to win the next general election. I give the Bill my full support.

8.1 pm

Mr. Ronnie Campbell (Blyth Valley): Trying to follow the hon. Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess) is very difficult. God help our teachers, pupils and schools if the Conservatives secure a 100-seat majority in the next Parliament. I am sure that our schools would literally start falling to the ground.

I welcome the news that teachers are to be given back union negotiating rights that perhaps should never have been taken from them in the first place.

Two weeks ago, I visited the schools in constituency. My first call was the high school. impressed by what I saw there of aspects of loca county council education. The school was well maint and the teachers had a fairly high morale. That was to see after a decade of low morale in schools i north-east. However, the head teacher said that he like to meet our shadow Education Secretary to he certain things right, because obviously the teachers were wishing and hoping for a return of a L Government. They have clearly marked their cards f choice of the next Government.

I next visited a first school. It should be remem that, although pay is important, so are working cond —as I know from having worked as a miner for part life. My visit to the first school was an entirely di story, for the morale there was very low. The scho fairly new, but the first sight that greeted me was a w hut that had stood there for 15 years, which was rott falling to bits. It served as a classroom for 30 kids a and seven. Needless to say, the teacher exper considerable difficulty trying to educate those chil not least because the hut was heated by a duct system, which made such a racket that she could heard and it had to be turned off, so the teacher w half-frozen. Such conditions should not be tolerate

Next to that was another wooden hut that w small for the number of children in the class, so some brighter kids had to be put in yet a third wooden hu school is no more than 15 or 20 years old, yet con there are deplorable.

While the children assembled in the hall to si teachers came to meet me and the vice-chairman education authority. I can assure the Governme they have no support from those teachers for the Bil the Education Act 1988, of which they are proud.

I notice that the Secretary of State has not yet r chart that I handed him during Question Time. given to me by teachers as an example of the wo they are required to do by law. That set of three requires each pupil to be the subject of a 45- assessment. As each class has 30 or more pupils, h teacher supposed to teach when he or she has to spe much time on assessments?

Ms. Armstrong: When my hon. Friend hand Secretary of State those charts earlier, there wa confusion about their purpose. As I understand the are a summation of the teacher assessments attainment targets for each of the main core curr subjects. Is my hon. Friend aware that teachers m only complete that task to comply with the legislation, but must also subject their pupils standard assessment test at age seven? We were tol former Secretary of State that assessments were importance than the tests themselves, but teach finding that statement both confusing and frus Primary school teachers must measure more tha attainment targets in the first year. Those targets match and have not been correlated, because the was implemented in a hurry by people who understand the demands of a primary school cla

Mr. Campbell: I had hoped that the Secretary would offer an explanation, but my hon. Friend h to the Government's rescue and put them right.

that the orange document that I gave the Secretary of State is still on the Table. He did not take it away to examine it, and it will probably be there still after the Division and then chucked into the dustbin. The whole scheme should be put into the dustbin.

That is the problem that teachers, especially those in first schools, have to face. They have to take assessments home. Naturally, they will not do the assessment and forget about teaching the kids, so they have to take them home and do them in the evening. They also have to prepare work for the next day's class at home in the evenings.

I talk to teachers—in fact, I live next door to one. In the summer, I often see her out in the garden preparing for next day's class—she works in a first school. How on earth can teachers, who are dedicated to their pupils, assess kids at the same time as trying to prepare their classes? If he can, will the Minister answer that question when he winds up? Can he rassure teachers about that? I assure the Minister that, if he visits schools, he will find that assessments will be one big headache come March, when every parent will have the right to go to a school and see an up-to-date chart whenever they wish. That will certainly cause problems for teachers.

The Prime Minister—I do not know who that is at this minute—said that she was in favour of the voucher system. I raised the subject with teachers, and asked for their assessment of it. The answer was simple—I was talking to teachers, not politicians. They thought that it was an opportunity for the rich to go to the schools of their choice. The rich will have the money to put with the voucher system, to pick the best schools. The rich will go to the best schools and those who do not have the money to put with the voucher will go to bad schools. That is how teachers assess the voucher system.

Perhaps Conservative Members think that they will be elected again next time with their new wonder, super trampoline man. Can we expect a voucher system to be a target for the Government? During the next election campaign, Conservative Members will be pressed on that subject, and they need to be. Teachers are sure that, if such a system in introduced, there will be a two-tier education service in this country.

Mr. Burt: Does it ever strike the hon. Gentleman that, at present, parents with money pay to move to large houses in expensive areas where there are good comprehensive schools, and leave kids in poor comprehensives at the other end of town to their fate? Does he not realise that that is the way that money works within the present state comprehensive system, and that it produces no more fairness than the system that he describes?

Mr. Campbell: That does not happen in my area, I am afraid. I do not represent a yuppie area, but an all-mining town in the north-east of England, where people tend to stay put. I am trying to explain that, as teachers are well aware, if a voucher system is introduced—as you have admitted it will be, although you do not know what you are going to do, but we will get it out of you one way or another—people will not shift. People do not just up and leave houses. It costs a lot of money to shift, and to get another mortgage to go somewhere else where you think that there may be better education.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must not keep bringing me into the debate, and his speech is now ranging rather wide.

Mr. Campbell: I apologise, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The introduction of the voucher system is a very emotive idea. We should press the Government on this issue all the time. I wish that the Government would listen to teachers and professionals. I have already heard all the humbug about not giving teachers money or about their having to line up for it. Teachers are professionals. The education of the nation, and of all our children, is in their hands. They are also dedicated people and we should treat them as such—in the same way that we now, just about, treat nurses in the health service. We now treat them as professionals and we should treat teachers in the same way.

Teachers are an honest bunch of people and many of them will not strike. Although one hon. Member mentioned a strike and said that teachers locked out children, for the sake of the kids, many teachers refuse to strike. They are dedicated to the kids' education. They have the schools at heart. As I said, the school that I visited last week would have been a disgrace to a Government of any party.

I hope that the Secretary of State will take note and will put some more money—if we can get it—into the education service.

8.14 pm

Mr. Alistair Burt (Bury, North): Having crossed swords with the hon. Member for Blyth Valley (Mr. Campbell), during his speech, I am happy to agree with his conclusions about the professional status of teachers. There is no difference between the two sides of the House on that. In recent years, the Government have tried their best to restore the professional status of teachers. The Government have treated both teachers and nurses better than the Labour Government ever did.

I begin by declaring an interest, as I have recently been appointed a parliamentary representative of the Assistant Masters and Mistresses Association. I join two other colleagues from the House—the hon. Members for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) and for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes), who also represent the AMMA. I have been appointed to replace my hon.Friend the Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key), whom I congratulate warmly upon his promotion into the Government. I pay tribute to him for his work on the Back Benches for the AMMA and for teachers and education in general.

My hon. Friend the Member for Salisbury is a genuine man and a good friend, who has the interests of education very much at heart. I wish him well, and I am sure that all Conservative Members, and many Opposition Members, look forward to him working in the Department of Education and Science at some time in the future. I worked there for three years as parliamentary private secretary to my right hon.Friend the Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker), who has certainly left his mark on education. It says much for his foresight that so much of today's wide debate on education is based upon issues that he raised to such public prominence. His recognition of the problems of standards in schools led to his determination to end so many years of talk about a national curriculum, and to introduce one. He focused the nation's attention on standards and quality, on parental choice and the local

[Mr. Alistair Burt]

independence of schools, and laid a basic framework, which has quite rightly been fleshed out and altered in the light of practical experience, just as he envisaged.

A back-handed tribute to my right hon. Friend is that the Opposition's so-called big idea for the forthcoming general election is the very idea that he had and developed three years ago. Opposition Members are seeking, unsuccessfully, to fight on what is really our ground. Their record on education—opposing the reforms of recent years—and their record when in office should fill no one with any confidence. One example is the Opposition's continued and persistent opposition to grant-maintained schools. Whatever may have been the original ideological objection on the Opposition Benches, the history of grant-maintained schools can now be evaluated in the light of experience.

As reports come through from various schools, especially those in which head teachers originally opposed the idea, they show that there is a tremendous change in staff attitude and morale. Case after case comes to the Department as the schools report. Teachers say that the whole atmosphere in a school, which had been threatened in one form or another, has changed. Headmasters report that they had been thinking of giving up the profession entirely 18 months ago, but they now feel—as their schools feel—rejuvenated.

I suggest to Opposition Members that any measure that can achieve that for education is worth considering. It is a choice and it is different. Grant-maintained schools may not be one's planned idea of how state education should go, but it is still state education—free education for children in our towns and boroughs. It is still an opportunity for them. The fact that it is something different, which teachers, head teachers, parents and children like, means that it should be given a chance.

If only Opposition Members would curtail their ideological opposition to an idea that they did not like when it was introduced and give it a chance, perhaps the county would have some confidence in their education programme. For as long as they persist in objecting on almost ideological grounds alone to developments such as grant-maintained schools, there will be no confidence in them. Grant-maintained schools have proved their worth and are giving real excitement back to people who are slogging away for children in our towns and cities. It has given them a chance.

I am glad to return to the theme of the debate—the Bill. This has been the sort of evening during which debate has ranged more widely. Back-Bench Members have enjoyed it because it is not often that we have an opportunity to spread ourselves a bit with the Whips nodding encouragement and telling us to keep going. However, the matters in hand are just as interesting.

One of the continuing problems in education over the past few years has been teachers' pay and conditions and the mechanism for deciding on them. I was in the Department of Education and Science when the difficult but necessary decision was taken to abandon Burnham. I am aware of the controversy and the arguments about the loss of negotiating rights and the effect of that on teachers' status. I have no doubt that the right decision was taken to end the unholy mess that Burnham had become and to set up the interim advisory committee. The situation in classrooms had become almost intolerable, and the anger at the loss of negotiating rights was g had letters from teachers in my constituency pr it was not a put-up job and that they were re —so was the sense of relief that something had to end the Burnham stalemate and give teach money.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Mole Va was then Secretary of State for Education and Sc a cartoon from the *Evening Standard*. It is still o of his current office. It shows a teacher being es a policeman down an identification parade a station. The line contains various undesirables of one sort or another and in the middl incongruously, is my right hon. Friend the M Mole Valley. The policeman is saying, "Can yo the man who stopped you in the playground an £600 a year rise on you?" At the time of the settlement teachers were complaining that money forced upon them and they were angry and receiving such a large increase.

The proof of the pudding over the past thre that that anger has, to a large extent, subsided receive as many letters about the matter constituents. Also, a combination of various settlements from the interim advisory commit financial support from the Government and r attitudes from the majority of teachers and t unions has meant no disruption in sch disruptions in schools three or four years ag dreadful atmosphere and to my right hon. Member for Mole Valley taking the action tha

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: The hon. Gentleman pay and the imposed pay rise. What does Gentleman say to teachers who have to work at who will in the future have to take home assessm and work preparing for the next day's class? W that side of the job? Surely they should not be in this day and age.

Mr. Burt: I am not sure that teachers shou doing that. Necessary work in preparation for always been done by teachers, often outside the hours and often involving work at home understood. At the moment, there is an excessi of work in the early stages of the national curr teacher in a secondary modern school in Rosse me through an exercise similar to that which Member for Blyth Valley (Mr. Campbell) showe hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State showed me the sort of work being done for ass sent it to my right hon. and learned Friend the of State and my hon. Friend the Minister ha written back to me explaining, as the Secretar explained to the hon. Member for Blyth Valle Government do not lay down in concrete w should be filled out. They are saying what work noted, not how. My view—I have expressed Secretary of State—is that there is a good arg saying that some of the work is excessive.

As the national curriculum is being implem Government should decide what it is essential t hope that the back-breaking work which I hav which the hon. Member for Blythe Valley des not last for ever. It is the early stages. A great d

is being done and in years to come it will be recognised by the authorities that much of it need not be done. We must devise a system that accurately records children's development without overdoing the pressure on teachers so that they find themselves doing that and nothing else. That would be ridiculous.

In some places, it is being overdone, but my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State and my hon. Friends on the Front Bench are receptive to the practical examples being sent to them. At some stage, a sensible balance will be achieved between what needs to be recorded and what does not, to teachers free to do the work that they must do while still keeping decent records.

Ms. Armstrong: The hon. Gentleman is making a good case for our arguments. We said that teachers should be much more involved in the development of the national curriculum and assessment procedures. If the hon. Gentleman had supported that, we might not have had these problems now. Will he support the view of Her Majesty's inspectors that primary teachers in particular should be given at least 10 per cent. non-contact time so that during the school day they can attend to the problems that we have been identifying?

Mr. Burt: I shall not talk about percentages, but I recognise the problem. It is appreciated that primary school teachers could do with more time and I am not against that.

In the introduction of something as complex and necessary as the national curriculum, there was bound to be a period during which different ideas and procedures would be considered so as to see what was best. It would be impossible to devise the best system at the first go. I was not able to support the hon. Member for Durham, North-West (Ms. Armstrong) because I do not think that her system would have been the best. We need to get the system into schools and then see what is best. If the Government pick up on that and the good common sense that teachers often display, we can get a workable system.

As we are coming to the passing of the interim advisory committee, we must not forget that it worked to stabilise the difficult position in schools during the mid-1980s. It has been a success. I pay tribute to my right hon. Friend the Member for Mole Valley for his foresight in taking a difficult but necessary decision. The 1987 settlement provided a pay rise of 16·4 per cent. The 1988 settlement increased the number and value of incentive allowances, some by as much as 60 per cent. The 1989 settlement secured pay rises of between 6 per cent. and 15 per cent. Burnham had to go and the interim advisory committee was the best thing in the intervening time. It was right to introduce it.

I welcome the introduction of incentive allowances. They have proved themselves. We can now see how they have increased in size and value. There are now some 174,000 in existence and there will be 14,400 new ones next year. They vary in size from just over £900 to £5,088. They will be increased next year by at least 20 per cent. for teachers who are not at the top of the main scale but who are awarded one of the 14,400 extra incentive allowances. It was a good idea, which brought some flexibility into the pay structure. It is right to recognise excellence, high professionalism and commitment.

All that said, it was clear that, as my hon. Friend the Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn) said, the committee was an interim measure. It was not acceptable to go on as we were. Hence the determination of my right hon. Friend the Member for Mole Valley who, even as he worked on other matters, consulted extensively to try to find a new system to lay the foundations for what was announced in July by my right hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, South (Mr. MacGregor) and what has been brought forward today by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State.

I welcome the broad thrust of the Government's proposals. Both I and moderate teachers, with whose representatives I have been in contact, welcome the return of the negotiating procedure. I am glad that we were not too hasty about bringing it back. It was right to talk it through carefully. However, I am pleased that there is to be a return to the negotiating procedure. I recognise the genuine feeling of concern in the teaching profession about its withdrawal.

I am pleased that there are to be separate committees for heads and deputy heads. I am also pleased about the linking of pay and conditions—a long overdue reform—the issuing of a timetable and the provisions to avoid deadlock. They are also welcome to all those who remember the interminable indecision of Burnham.

I intend to highlight two concerns that have been referred to in the debate. I do not believe that they are insuperable. The Bill ought to be given a Second Reading, but I expect those matters to be fully debated in Committee. I hope that the Government will therefore accept well-meaning expressions of concern. On the machinery of negotiation, the Government will need to exert themselves as to the issue of their reserve powers in order to explain precisely how they intend to use them, and under what circumstances.

Although I believe that reserve powers are a legitimate refuge for a Secretary of State in order to deal with a problem, it is clear that a full explanation of their intended use would take much of the sting out of attacks upon them. There is no overwhelming consensus for an independent review body, and the credibility of the new pay arrangements will be adversely affected unless a measure of independence is guaranteed. I hope that Ministers will take due note of that in the wind-up speech and in Committee.

Ministers must also recognise that there is a certain amount of concern in the teaching profession about local determination of pay. I believe that to be an evolutionary development from the flexibility introduced through the interim advisory committee. However, it is new and not fully tested. The Secretary of State would do well to proceed with caution and to listen carefully to the arguments on that point in Committee. I believe that it is a welcome development, but it is fraught with difficulties and must be properly and fully explained.

At the heart of the Bill is a further Government commitment to restore the status of the teaching profession. That is both right and proper. The problem is not so difficult as it is sometimes made out to be by Opposition Members. The vast majority of my constituents have a high regard for their children's teachers. They recognise that tremendous efforts are being made to cope with changes to examinations and with the national curriculum. Parents want, as do teachers, the continued improvement in standards and quality to which this Government are committed. They made their benchmark on that at a far earlier date than the Opposition. Parents in my constituency want their children's teachers to be well

[Mr. Burt]

paid. They also want the Government to recognise that fact. Our record in that respect is far better than that of the Opposition.

The Bill—the main thrust of which I welcome and support, with some reservations that must be considered in Committee—represents yet another change in education. Few other areas of our national life have experienced such change in recent years. Despite the media's concentration on some bad examples of education in England and Wales, the majority of schools—heads, assistants and teachers—have made strenuous efforts to come to terms with and to implement change, to the best of their ability. However, the speed and, on occasion, the manner of those changes have caused concern.

Despite the extraordinary achievements of my right hon. Friend the Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher) in all her many works, the Government have been thought sometimes to be going too far and too fast and listening too little. When change is necessary, speed of decision is a good quality for which we should make no apologies, but there is no reason why adequate explanation and a determination at least to create some form of consensus should not be an integral part of our future approach.

Recently the Foreign Secretary said that, should he be elected Prime Minister, he would introduce, as a stamp of government, the policy of listening, deciding and persuading. I hope that that will be the stamp of the new Government under the leadership of my right hon. Friend the Member for Huntingdon (Mr. Major). I am sure, knowing him, that the sentiments expressed by my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary will strike a strong chord among the teaching profession and the wider public. Such an approach would be warmly welcomed. I hope that we make a good start during the passage of the Bill.

8.34 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): It is interesting to reflect on the departure of the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher) and her arrival on the collective bargaining scene in 1978. When there was a dispute at Ford and the workers went on strike to share, as they then described it, in Ford's prosperity, the right hon. Member for Finchley hastened there to assure the strikers that, under a Conservative Government, there would be free collective bargaining. This measure demonstrates the calumny of that announcement. It is not true. It amounts to more centralised dictatorship by the Secretary of State for Education and Science.

Schedule 1 provides the Secretary of State with the power to appoint the main committee and the sub-committee. He will have the absolute power to determine pay relationships. At the same time, the Government welcome the changes in eastern Europe. There were no free, independent trade unions in those countries. Trade unions were very much the creature of the state. Eastern European states fell into the error of not allowing independent trade unions to scrutinise the machinery of government.

By taking these powers, the Secretary of State intends to bring back pay bargaining, but it is not really pay bargaining; it is pay deciding by the Secretary of State. He has not chosen to make provision for the affirmative resolution procedure. The House would then have, as of right, a paltry one and a half hours in whic merits of the Secretary of State's decision. T State intends to use instead the nega procedure. For the Bill not to provide for resolution procedure is yet another subversion by the Government of our example of the Secretary of State's determ strong, centralised powers of imposition.

According to the negative resolutio prayer has to be tabled and time obta obtained need not necessarily be the full hours required for the affirmative resolu The time obtained has to be negotiated th channels. If we want a debate to be held un resolution procedure, that has to be neg the usual channels, too. With the affirm procedure, there has to be a resolutio statutory instrument.

The Department of Education and Scie for abusing the legislative powers of the H Education Reform Act 1988, powers are are known as the Henry VIII sections—by the Secretary of State can amend the pri passed by the House of Commons. That misuse of legislative powers.

Mr. Straw: My hon. Friend speaks w authority as Chairman of the joint Statutory Instruments. Will he confirm t this difference between the negative and resolution procedures: that an order un procedure can come into force before it h in the House, even though a prayer has be it?

Mr. Cryer: Indeed: my hon. Friend is Moreover, because of primary legislatio House, an order can be laid, and can com when the House is not sitting. The day before the House counts in the numbe which prayers can be laid. The annulme negative instruments is less than satisfac

A delegated legislation conference of countries was held at the end of 198 Department of Education and Science the way in which it has abused the proced —not by me or elected representatives b the Select Committee on Statutory Instru looking for particularly outlandish exan powers.

The Bill will not improve the general the teaching profession. Teachers must with the removal of negotiating rights an bargaining system which they had been years, but must deal with the shortage o not exemplified by them personally, alth not good.

I hope that the Minister will say, h provisions in schedule 3 for the c chairman and members of the advisor compare with teachers' pay. It is intere the Secretary of State has the power to d and conditions, but will their pay be in l pay or will it be very much more? If it is as I suspect, over the generality of teac will cause even more affront to the tea

Quite apart from their incomes, teachers are concerned about the lack of money for education. For example, they are outraged by the nearly £9 million that was paid in 1989-90 to the city technology college in Bradford, when roughly £9 million has been provided for the capital expenditure of almost 300 state schools in Bradford. I attended prizegiving at Buttershaw upper school last Friday, when the head made it clear—I endorsed his view strongly—that the CTC can provide nothing that cannot be provided in a superior and emphatically better way in the state sector.

When the Government speak of choice, they are speaking of the choice between a state sector starved of public funds and the demonstrable public relations front of the CTC, which has a new building, new equipment and has had lavish expenditure on its facilities. Compare that with, for example, the theatre of Buttershaw upper, which has been in existence for 25 years but is having to raise money for refurbishment because insufficient money has been made available by the Government.

Teachers at Buttershaw upper, as in every other state school in Bradford, are dedicated and devoted to their cause and to the children they serve. None the less, a comparison with the CTC is invidious. The Government pour money into CTCs, but as the Department of Education and Science deals with applications from local authorities in a fairly leisurely fashion, it will be almost two years before a school that was damaged by fire—its pupils have transferred to buildings in my constituency because of that fire—can be restored at least in part.

Under local management for schools, teachers have extra burdens thrust on them, which is causing enormous difficulties. When the Pickles majority of Conservatives were in power in Bradford, they imposed their local mangement schemes on schools but made no provision for a schedule of dilapidation for each school and made no clear apportionment between local authority expenditure and school budget expenditure on major capital items. That is causing enormous difficulties. Since Labour councillors gained control of Bradford, they have redirected expenditure, albeit under a limited Tory budget, to the best of their ability. Several million pounds have been given to education, which forestalled what would have been a certain crisis because of the lack of expenditure by Tories in Bradford.

Mr. Nicholas ... mett: Does the hon. Gentleman believe that the statistics on teachers' pay, capital expenditure, size of classes or any other education statistic were better under the Government in which he was a Minister than under this Government? He was a Minister in that Government, who had an appalling record.

Mr. Cryer: I am delighted to tell the hon. Gentleman that, contrary to the campaign on denigration and mischievous misrepresentation which he and his fellow Conservatives have undertaken, in comprehensive education, which covers between 85 and 90 per cent. of our children, the number of O and A-levels obtained per thousand children increased virtually every year from 1970. Therefore, why on earth the Government are attacking comprehensive schools I really do not know. On the criterion of academic achievement, comprehensive schools have been successful. I know, and I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will recognise, that education is not solely about passing examinations but about many o things. The hon. Gentleman and his fellow Conserva tend to take only the examinations criterion into acco

Mr. Bennett: Examination results are an impor criterion and quality control standard. Why did the I London education authority, before it was abolished April this year, spend more on pupils than any o authority, yet come 88th in the examination lea Waltham Forest, another Labour authority, spent £2 per pupil but came 95th. The best authorities spent least, and in the main were Conservative author Before the hon. Gentleman says that the reason for th the existence of middle-class areas, I would point out Wigan, a Labour authority, came 15th in the examina league. It is a question not of money but of qualit examination results and quality control in schools.

Mr. Cryer: The hon. Gentleman has trotted out t claims before, but London has some of the w education problems. He is saying that, if an area has education problems, it cannot exceed a centrally dire level of expenditure. It is characteristic of him and fellow Conservatives that they are simply not prepare take into account the variations in pattern around country. Of course there will be a higher and lower lev education expenditure, and there is bound to be s variation in examination results. That is one of differences between regions and cities. It does the Gentleman no good to advance that argument, whi paltry, to say the least.

I draw the House's attention to the other aspec centralised control that causes me considerable conc Clause 5(4) says:

"the Secretary of State may give directions to the Advi Committee as to considerations to which they are to regard and financial or other constraints to which recommendations are to be subject, and as to the time w which they are to report to him; and any such directions be varied or revoked by further directions under this secti

The reference to revoking directions shows s formality, but nowhere in the Bill do I see a definitio "directions". A direction is not subject to the approv the House or of anyone down the Corridor; it i unfettered, unanswerable, unaccountable power give the Bill to the Secretary of State for Education Science. That is not good enough. The directions shoul defined. This is a way of getting around the deleg legislation powers laid down by the House. Department of Education and Science not only abuse powers of subordinate legislation but tries to get rou altogether. That must be stopped.

Over the past few days, the Government have trotting out a lot of support for the United Nations. hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough Flannery) drew attention to the International La Organisation, which has strongly criticised the Bill. I not go into the criticisms, because my hon. Friend them out. I want to point out the importance of United Nations-affiliated body. If the Government ch to support the United Nations over the Gulf, they not be selective. They must take notice of the ILO recognise that it is worried about the deliberate unila abrogation of collective bargaining rights for teac This is unfair and unjust for teachers, just as it woul for any other section of employed people. I hope tha Government recognise that.

8.51 pm

Mr. George Walden (Buckingham): I hope that the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) will excuse me if I do not approach the problems of education in Britain from the prism of the Gulf and the United Nations. There are other slightly more relevant approaches. I apologise to Front Benchers for my absence from the debate for the past couple of hours—there have been external distractions.

I congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State on the wisdom of the Bill, which to some extent he owes to his predecessor, and particularly on the persuasive way in which he presented it to the House. The teaching profession has had to wait a long time to have its pay arrangements modified and updated. During that period, it has had to undergo a series of reforms, with all the strains that that involves.

Unlike some hon. Members, I believe that it is necessary to be frank about what we are discussing. We are talking not only about pay but, by the Government's definition, about recruitment, retention and motivation. I was glad that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State placed some stress on quality. To discuss the teaching profession and its pay purely in terms of recruitment, retention and motivation without any emphasis on quality is to misjudge the basis of the issue.

In his previous incarnation, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State—he is not here, for reasons which I understand—was Secretary of State for Health. I wish to say something that will not please the Opposition but it reflects the truth, which is what we are here to discuss. When my right hon. and learned Friend was in charge of nurses, he had problems of recruitment and retention, but not of quality. I, for one, have never heard any of my constituents complain or seen any reports in the press about the inadequate quality of nurses. As a user of the national health service, I have nothing to complain about in that respect.

The Opposition know as well as I do that it is a fact of life that there is a problem with the quality of teachers. It afflicts those with the least social and economic advantages much more than it afflicts people like me who send their children to private schools, for reasons which I would be happy to defend. In addressing pay, recruitment, retention and motivation, we must lay the emphasis on quality because that problem is clearly perceived by ordinary people.

To begin with the mechanics of the Bill, it is natural that the Opposition should query the insistence by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State on the need for regional pay bargaining and opt-out arrangements. I do not want to enter into any great controversy. Apart from anything else, it might be difficult to steam up the Chamber on this issue as I seem to be the only person on the Conservative Benches.

The philosophy of the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) seems to fit naturally with his philosophy on the uniformity and homogeneity of the comprehensive system. That is not a contentious statement but an objective observation. It is a fact of Labour party policy to want to have—I do not say "impose"—a uniform comprehensive system, but that is another issue. It is natural that the hon. Member for Blackburn should want uniform national pay bargaining to go with that system. I listened to what he said about the need for some local variation, but the emphasis of his speech and approach was, naturally and legitimately fro view, on uniformity and socialist neatness

I do not happen to agree. I agree with my learned Friend the Secretary of State ab harsher and more difficult course of differ rational that, in favouring the opting out right hon. and learned Friend should favou of pay negotiations, because the two go tog Member for Blackburn talked about the di opting out of schools and of pay negotiati to look more in terms of a variegated and offering more opportunities to those depri including, lamentably, large numbers of p

I congratulate my right hon. and learn Secretary of State both on his insistence on negotiations and on his caution. The ho Blackburn was, I think, right to draw a possibility of the risk of inflation in accompanied by no compensating gain in teaching or management; that, at any r interpreted his remarks. In the course of wh a very responsible exchange between Benches, my right hon. and learned Friend demonstration of naive enthusiasm. On t appeared prudently to recognise the possi

As I have explained, I believe that the if people are to be offered the choice t crucial. I agree with my right hon. and lea is necessary to run the risk, but to run it pru thing that we need is a system whic leapfrogging local authority teachers' p compensating improvement in quality.

That brings me back to the central then the risk of being divisive, or what the A party-pooper, I must say that quality strik to the problem. I was encouraged by wha and learned Friend the Secretary of State the latest recruitment statistics. I k Government say that teacher shortages confined to certain subjects; neverth disturbing evidence that the problem ma further.

If the shortages begin to bite harder as dip deepens, we may experience a recruiters may be driven, to put it crudely who offers to do the job.

I am aware that we have not reached t it really is a nightmare. If it becomes reali recruited will, by definition, be given the e for life, and once in the profession may b remove; moreover, it is a sociological they will find themselves teaching in th parts of the country. Time and again, w the inequality of opportunity that has so in the past.

As the years go by, we must monitor the mere mechanics of recruitment and quality of those recruited. I hope that my Minister will be able to satisfy my cu pattern of A-level scores achieved by th teaching over the past few years. I ackn is a rough-and-ready guide, but at leas some sort to the quality of new recruits.

It is not enough for my right hon. an the Secretary of State simply to say

entering the profession are sufficient to staff the profession. We are asking more of teachers. We are not only placing more responsibility on them in connection with the GCSE examinations—we are asking them to make more judgments about the pupils. That, of course, is in the nature of the the examinations. We must ensure that quality is not only maintained but improved, because children's futures depend increasingly on the judgments of individual teachers.

Another reason not only to maintain but to improve the quality of teaching relates to international comparisons. I hope that the traumas of the past few years have taught us one thing—that we cannot think only in terms of our own national performance. We must watch with a keen eye the quality of teaching in other countries and make comparisons, however disturbing they may occasionally be.

If we are to get teachers of quality, it is not enough to offer them good pay, although that is essential; we must also offer them good conditions. To put it simply, we must also offer them good children. When I say that, I am thinking of children starting school at the age of five. Are they children whom teachers will find it easy to handle? These children are not always easy to handle. I am not talking merely about children in deprived areas, but about those in my own area, where in many classes a third or more of the children come from broken homes.

I apologise to my hon. Friend the Minister for reverting to the subject of nursery schools. To improve the quality of education in the country as a whole, and to attract higher-quality graduates and teachers to the profession, it is essential that the Government have a plan, however long term, to introduce uniform, high-quality nursery education for people of all social backgrounds—and not only for those able to pay for it. If the Government do that, they will—overnight—make the teaching profession far more attractive because teachers will inherit children who, from the age of five, are less likely to suffer from behavioural problems and who are far more adapted to learning.

Any hon. Member who has talked to teachers will have heard them explain in graphic detail how difficult it is to start teaching a child of five who has behavioural problems, who cannot tie his or her shoe laces and who has not even a minimal sense of discipline. Nursery schools will have an important influence on the recruitment, motivation and retention of teachers. I urge the Government to keep that necessity closely in mind, quite apart from all the other self-evident educational benefits that flow from high-quality nursery education.

The final thought with which I leave my hon. Friend is that, when one looks in detail at the Government's proposals, and at the intricate and subtly elastic formulae by which teachers will be able to get a little bit ahead of the annual increases for non-manual workers, one is encouraged in as much as they allow the possibility of recognition by the Government that there is a problem not only in terms of recruitment, but perhaps also in terms of recruitment of the necessary quality. However, the proposals are a little over-prudent in the sense that slightly more dramatic measures will be needed in the years to come. If we are to attempt to bring ourselves up to the standards achieved in some continental countries, we must face the country with the need for some transfer of resources—I know that there is no easy new money available—from other areas of government to education, to achieve a high-quality teaching profession. It will p necessary to raise teachers's pay more dramatically th implied by the present cautious formulae.

The Bill presents a sensible new system for dec teachers' pay, but there will have to be a national w put more effort and resources into education. It wi necessary to explain to the public why there have transfers from other areas—I have my own views a where they should come from—to raise the quality o profession. Even the hon. Member for Blackburn Straw) in his Walden interview was driven to reco that that may be a problem. This is a satisfactory Bil the Government will have to recognise that the cent the debate is and will remain the issue of teacher qu

9.10 pm

Mr. Edward O'Hara (Knowsley, South): Like the Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden) I apologis having been unable to attend the whole debate, a apologise in advance if I am therefore slightly repeti of matters covered earlier. I had a long-stan commitment this morning to support pupils from a sp school in my authority's area who were recipients o of the schools curriculum awards. I then entertained —it was a learning experience for them—in the Hous afternoon. I am sure that hon. Members who attended this debate will applaud such an active expre of commitment and support for the staff and pupi Cartbridge special school in Knowsley. I pay tribu those pupils—they are designated as having behavio difficulties—for the impeccable way in which represented their school today in trying circumstanc the capital.

At one point during the afternoon, when my g were in the Gallery listening to a sample of the deb heard the Secretary of State list the purposes behin Bill. The Bill must be judged in the light of how it with those purposes, which were to improve the quali entrants to the profession, to improve retention in profession, to find teachers of specific subjects to fill where they are needed, to raise morale and to motivat profession, which I hope means to motivate them to of their best to all the nation's children.

I wish to discuss the provisions of opting out o national pay negotiations and to discover how adequ the Bill deals with the purposes listed by the Secreta State. The Bill is based on a cruel deceit, speci justified in the Secretary of State's speech b misrepresentative stereotype: of the irresponsible La authority unable to compete in the wages free-for-al to extravagance with its resources. Most La authorities are voted into office because their electo trust them to take responsibility for the services that need, and in the main those authorities acquit thems honourably of their responsibilities.

The deceit lies in the suggestion that differe payments of salary can be allowed without engend division between schools and between the haves an have-nots in society—all from a party which in the week or so has had a sudden excess of enthusiasm fo classless society. The deceit is cruel because it compound the problems of the authorities which hav greatest problems and therefore need the best qualifie best motivated teachers.

[Mr. Edward O'Hara]

What are the extravagances upon which those authorities expend their scarce resources? Plenty of Labour-controlled authorities such as mine in Knowsley have to struggle with the resources available at their disposal to provide educational guidance services, necessitous clothing and free school meals. They must also provide a careers service—and there is a paradox, because the more depressed the economy, the less optimistic are the job prospects for young people. The careers guidance service must therefore work harder, which in turn must have resource implications.

The extravagances also include nursery education—here I agree with the hon. Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden)—and provision for special educational needs such as that expended on pupils whom I entertained today. It also includes the provision of speech therapists.

Those authorities recruit, retain and motivate their teachers through their proven commitment to the education service and to the support services that their teachers need—services which certain tabloids present as an extravagant use of resources. The efforts of those authorities and the loyalty of their teachers are undermined by the Government's patent lack of commitment, as shown by their refusal to put resources into the education service.

The statistics may have been referred to earlier. We may talk about a 10 per cent. increase in expenditure, but there has been a decline in central Government input while local government input into the education service has increased. There has also been a fall in the share of gross domestic product going to education, and in the next spending round there is a clear lack of commitment to maintaining spending on education relative to other services. The Bill will further undermine the loyalty of teachers in those authorities.

Will the Bill improve quality at entry or improve retention and morale? No, it will not do that for the profession or for the teachers of all the nation's children. If it achieves anything, it may concentrate the best that is available in the few authorities most able to pay because they have fewer attendant and legitimate calls on their resources, or in the few schools fortunate enough to have children whose parents can contribute if they are not already adequately bankrolled by the Government.

The Bill ignores the real measures which might achieve the purposes that the Secretary of State set out. It ignores measures to improve the quality of teacher education and a scheme of teacher appraisal as an instrument of professional development. It ignores the possibility of a general teachers' council to underpin the status and self-esteem of teachers and their control of the quality of the teaching profession. Above all, it ignores a commitment of adequate resources to the service and to teachers' salaries as a whole.

The Bill is built on the familiar fallacy so evident in the city technology colleges and the grant-maintained schools—that the success of the advantaged few can benefit the many by example. The Bill contains the same inbuilt dynamic. In fact, the success of the few can be achieved only at the expense of the majority. The Bill does not begin to address the problems that it should address, and it should be rejected.

9.19 pm

Mr. Derek Fatchett (Leeds, Central): I should probably start by congratulating those who have participated in the debate on having the strength to resist other temptations around the building. My hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) has participated in virtually all the debate, and others who achieved the same target have shown aspects of democracy at its very best on what may be remembered as an historic occasion.

It is not without significance that this is the first education debate with the new Secretary of State who, together with the rest of the country, is aware that the Labour party is putting forward positive policies on education and enjoys a 30 per cent. lead in the opinion polls. So worried was the Conservative party about Labour's education lead that, in order to divert public attention from our sensible education policies today, it organised a leadership election. They were so desperate to keep the debate away from the media's attention.

May I say, in parenthesis, that I acknowledge the wisdom of the choice of Education Ministers. I suspect that, at some later stage, they will not be in a position to come back and lecture us about backing winners. It is good to see unanimity in the Department of Education and Science for once. Given that Department's track record, it is not surprising that it got the result totally wrong.

I suspect that today's election will be remembered in future history classes because it offers an interesting question—when was the first time that a political party could organise an election system in which a candidate who gained a majority was ejected from office and a subsequent candidate who did not gain a majority was then declared the winner? It may well be the first time in history that a person with a majority has been rejected and someone without a majority has been acclaimed the victor.

That election system will appeal to the Liberal party, representatives of which are not here at present. Those of us who listened to all the debate enjoyed the Liberal cameo from the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor), which was a typical Liberal Democrat speech. I noted virtually all his comments for 15 minutes, and every one was a criticism of the Bill. He then said that he was going to vote for it and would recommend to his hon. Friends that they do exactly the same. He also said that they would demand that certain conditions should be met, or they would not vote with the Government on Third Reading. I am sure that the right hon. Member for Huntingdon (Mr. Major) will lose a night's sleep tonight with that threat from the Liberal Democrats, whose spokesman gave us a typical performance.

A backcloth to this debate was provided by discussions on teacher morale. It was interesting that all speakers recognised that there is a problem of low teacher morale. The Secretary of State, and one or two of his colleagues, presumably working from the same central office brief, argued that the collapse in teacher morale was somehow attributable to the teachers' pay disputes of the mid-1980s. I find that a strange argument. I notice that the Parliamentary Private Secretary, the hon. Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns), nods away sagely behind the Ministers. He, too, can read the brief.

Members of the interim advisory committee responsible for writing this year's report said that there had been a further collapse in teacher morale in the past two years. My sense of history may not be great, but it is sufficient to

tell me that there have been no teacher disputes during the past two years. Teacher morale has fallen for a number of other reasons. If Conservative Members do not understand that, they simply do not understand the current problems facing teachers trying to perform their roles as classroom teachers and as part of the education system. One can list those problems.

All primary schoolteachers have been worried by the weight and pace of the introduction of the national curriculum. It is difficult for them to know what will happen next year about testing at the age of seven. Conservative Members may ask, why should they know, when even the Secretary of State does not know what will happen about testing? The difference is that primary teachers have a direct responsibility for their children and would like to know what will happen about testing.

We have heard about morale. Many teachers are trying to carry out difficult tasks in crumbling schools but Conservative Members say that that does not matter. For reasons that will be apparent to hon. Members, I recently spent a few weeks in Bradford, where we mounted a successful campaign. While there, I saw schools in which it was extremely difficult for teachers and children to perform to the top of their ability and to extend their talents. One of the schools that I visited had been in temporary buildings for seven years. The head teacher told me that it was so cold moving from one temporary classroom to another that the authority provided the teachers with thermal underwear. It would be much better if the Government provided those children with a proper school so that they could get on with the real job of learning.

The local authority in Bradford was the Thatcher experiment in the north of England. I do not know whether the new leader of the Conservative party approves of what went on in Bradford, but the people there did not approve of that experiment with their children, and nor do they approve for one moment of a reduction this year of £13 million in the education budget. That is a sign of the education priorities of Bradford's Conservatives.

My hon. Friend the Member for Knowsley, South (Mr. O'Hara) said that one or two people in the Conservative party have suddenly discovered education. That is a thin commitment, especially when judged against the record of what Conservatives in local government in places such as Bradford have done to the education system. I visited in Bedworth a secondary school which was under local management, and the head teacher told me that he was to lose two and a half teaching posts. How can we maintain morale and improve standards in schools that are faced with such cuts, and what are the implications for the delivery of the curriculum and good quality education?

Morale in the teaching profession is at an all-time low. That is not a criticism of teachers and their performance —quite the opposite: they are doing an excellent job in difficult circumstances. A real partnership in education must be built between Government and teachers. Government should provide teachers with the tools, resources and ability to allow them to get on with the job of providing our children with the education that they deserve and the country needs for the future. The Government have failed to keep their part of the bargain.

The Bill will do little to raise the morale of teachers. My hon. Friends the Members for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) and for City of Durham (Mr. Steinberg) spoke about the machinery introduced by the Bill, which will add yet again to the centralised powers of the Department of Education and Science. My hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) chastised the Department for its use of those powers. One of the Secretary of State's predecessors took for the holder of that office more than 400 powers in the Education Reform Act 1988. The Bill adds to those powers. The problem which has been evident in all the speeches in the debate is that they can be used arbitrarily and whimsically in the industrial relations and collective bargaining processes.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Fatchett: The Secretary of State shakes his head, but as the Bill stands, he can intervene on a negotiated settlement and tell the parties that the settlement is unacceptable. There are no parameters to begin with, yet there is a whimsical and arbitrary decision at the end. If we are to have true negotiations and good industrial relations, surely those involved have a right to expect that they will be provided with clear parameters from the Secretary of State rather than his being allowed simply to intervene in a way that will be totally disruptive.

The other key element of the Bill deals with the opt-out provisions by which grant-maintained schools and local education authorities can opt out of the national pay bargaining procedures. It is absolutely clear from all the speeches from Conservative Members, including those from the hon. Members for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) for Epping Forest (Mr. Norris) and for Buckingham (Mr. Walden), that the opt-out mechanism is regarded as the means of introducing competitive bidding for a scarce resource. That scare resource is the teacher.

The Secretary of State made two interesting comments, one of which showed an ignorance of reality and the other his failure to understand the importance of his own role. Taking the second point first, the right hon. and learned Gentleman seemed relaxed about the prospect of individual local authorities opting out of the national agreement. Indeed, he went further and said—I believe that I am quoting him correctly—that he looked forward to a situation in which three quarters of local education authorities will opt out of the national pay bargaining machinery.

The Secretary of State then failed to understand that by allowing, and, indeed, encouraging that process, the Government have no view about and no role in teacher supply or pay, or the distribution of teachers across subjects and local authorities. The Secretary of State has abdicated his own responsibility in the Thatcherite dream of how the free market is supposed to work.

Mr. Walden: I am not seeking to make a mischievous point, but the hon. Gentleman said earlier that my right hon. and learned Friend was centralising powers. He is now saying that my right hon. and learned Friend is irresponsibly throwing his authority to the dogs. Is it not true that, by the very caution of his presentation of this issue, my right hon. and learned Friend is showing that he is aware of the need to encourage local responsibility and devolution, while having some sense of national restraint? Why does the hon. Gentleman not recognise that fact rather than seeking to make mischief on both sides of the argument?

Mr. Fatchett: I was not trying to make mischief, but to point out to the hon. Gentleman and to his right hon. and

[Mr. Fatchett]

learned Friend that there is a contradiction in the Government's philosophical position, as is so often the case with the Thatcherite philosophy of an autocratic centre combined with a belief in the free market. Both are irresponsible positions.

The other part of the Secretary of State's argument is that opt-out will not lead to leap-frogging, because there are no shortages. Recently, when the teachers' unions published their survey on teacher shortages, the Secretary of State said that there was no problem and that teacher shortages do not exist. The Secretary of State's response was to say that the results of the survey were "ludicrous".

I thought that, instead of relying on the teachers' unions' data, I would go and have a look at the figures produced by the Department of Education and Science. I went back to its recent comprehensive survey which the right hon. and learned Gentleman's predecessor published on 17 July. Over a five-year period by subject, and a shorter period by individual local authorities, the survey showed that the problem of teacher shortages is growing. The subject areas in which teacher shortages have grown in the past five years include French, German, history, geography, craft design and technology, music, physical education, religious education, drama, careers and remedial education——

Mr. Flannery: What is left?

Mr. Fatchett: Yes, not a great deal of the curriculum is left, when all these subjects are taken out.

I repeat that teacher shortages have increased in all those subjects. In addition, the DES provided the figures by region. Not one region has improved on the figures provided by the Department; indeed, the figures for every region have deteriorated. For example, in the northern region, the number of vacancies trebled during the period 1988-90. That is based not on my statistics, not on the statistics of the teachers' unions, but on the Department's statistics. In the Yorkshire and Humberside region, the number of vacancies increased by 33 per cent. The number of vacancies in London rose by 50 per cent., and in the rest of the south-east by 100 per cent. The reality is that teacher shortages are a serious problem.

The Secretary of State argues that there is not a teacher shortage. He also tries to tell us of another success story —that recruitment for initial teacher training is working so well that we do not need to worry about future teacher shortages. I shall cite figures that were given in *Hansard* on 26 March for recruitment to the areas of skills shortages, compared with the targets set by the Department. For maths, recruitment was 75 per cent. of the target figure; for craft, design and technology, it was 70 per cent.; for chemistry, it was 72 per cent.; and for physics, it was 55 per cent. The Secretary of State claims that each of those figures is some sort of success. Is not the reality quite different? The truth is that there is an increasing problem of teacher shortages.

Conservative Members advocate the opt-out procedure, but they do so for only one reason. They represent the rich south-east of England, and they want to use the opt-out procedure to buy in teachers, not to add to teacher supply——

Mr. Timothy Wood (Stevenage): To add to cost.

Mr. Fatchett: The Government Whip is right. He should not have said that. No doubt he will be writing a letter of apology later. He was right to say that the opt-out procedure will add to costs—*[Interruption.]* The Secretary of State appears to be telling the hon. Gentleman what he should have said, but in fact his remark was true. It will add to costs, but it will not add one additional teacher to the teaching force.

The opting-out procedure will result in a redistribution from the poorer authorities in inner London to the better-off, outer-London authorities. Tonight's *Evening Standard* highlighted the crisis of teacher shortages in London. The Bill will add to that crisis, to the cost of inner-London boroughs and to the benefit of outer London boroughs. It is a redistribution from the poor to the rich, and that characterises the Government's record during the past 11 years.

The Bill could have done a great deal for teacher morale if it had dealt with the establishment of a general teaching council and with teacher appraisal, which this Government have decided not to introduce. It would have helped to improve quality in the classroom. The Government could do a great deal more in initial teacher training. It is the Labour party that is advocating a national core curriculum for teacher training and national standards of competence in newly trained teachers.

The Government could have done a great deal more to attract teachers from the pool of qualified teachers that are currently inactive. Indeed, there are as many inactive as there are active teachers. What have the Government done about that pool of teachers, who could be retrained and who could work in the classroom? They are spending no more than the cost of four teachers' salaries in each local authority—hardly a programme designed to attract teachers back to the profession and to give them the confidence, the training and, in many cases, the necessary help with child care to enable them to return to work.

As always, the Government have greatly damaged our education system. They have damaged the morale of teachers. One of their most damaging acts, even for this Government, was to take negotiating rights away from teachers. The Bill does little to rectify that record. It is too late, it does too little, and it does not deal with the major problems in our education system. That is why I shall ask my right hon. and hon. Friends to vote for our amendment, which puts forward a real policy for education and gives hope to parents and children.

9.39 pm

The Minister of State, Department of Education and Science (Mr. Tim Eggar): We had a wide-ranging debate and I am sure that we all felt that we were at the centre of the nation's affairs. That was well borne out by the level of attendance throughout the debate.

I particularly welcomed the comments of my hon. Friends the Members for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall), for Hyndburn (Mr. Hargreaves), and for Basildon (Mr. Amess), of my hon. Friend the Member for Bury, North (Mr. Burt)—whom I welcome with his newly declared interest—and of the hon. Member for Antrim, East (Mr. Beggs). I am grateful for the way in which my hon. Friends praised the professionalism and ability of so many of our teachers, which was in stark contrast to the comments of Opposition Members. It was not until the speech of the

hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) that we heard any praise for the work that our teachers do in the classrooms.

Mr. Cryer: That is not true. I said that they are dedicated.

Mr. Eggar: I am delighted to hear the hon. Gentleman remark that teachers are dedicated, although he was not present in the Chamber for most of the debate.

I do not recognise from the many visits that I have paid to primary and secondary schools throughout the country over the past two or three months the gloomy picture painted by Opposition Members. I pay my own tribute to teachers' dedication and commitment, and to their achievements in giving effect to many of the far-reaching improvements that we introduced over the past two or three years.

The situation in schools today is very different from four or five years ago. The credit for that transformation belongs to the teachers themselves. Many teachers and their unions recognise the folly of the union action of the 1980s. Great credit is also due to the interim advisory committee, whose reports led to far-reaching improvements to the teachers' pay structure. I noted with interest the remarks of the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) about the IAC's role. The Government played their part in rebuilding teachers' self-esteem and in reaffirming to parents the importance and commitment of the teaching profession.

The Bill is an important step forward. By restoring teachers' negotiating rights, we are expressing our confidence that the progress made in recent years will be sustained. The Bill does not look back to the shambles of Burnham, but looks forward——

Mr. Straw: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Eggar: —to the effective determination of teachers' pay——

Mr. Straw *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman knows that, if the Minister does not choose to give way, the hon. Gentleman must resume his seat.

Mr. Eggar: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Straw: The Minister praises the interim advisory committee and suggests that everything has changed since 1986. If that is true, why does the IAC's third report, published just a few months ago, state:

"We are in no doubt from our schools visits that teacher morale is lower now that in our first two years, and that a number of factors are contributing to this."?

Why is teacher morale lower now than it was before?

Mr. Eggar: One reason why teachers feel undervalued are remarks of the kind just made by the hon. Member for Blackburn, who year after year produces false prospectuses about teacher shortages and makes no apology when his claims are proved wrong. The hon. Gentleman has a role to play in contributing to improving the status of the teaching profession—a role that he has consistently refused to play.

I recognise that every feature of the Bill will not be welcome to every party involved. We have to realise that the divisions between the various teaching unions are as deep as ever. We all know that their own particular interests rarely coincide. But the machinery that we are introducing, through the Bill, will give the employers and the six unions the opportunity to discuss, to negotiate and, I hope, to agree. That is what most of those concerned really wanted.

There is a second, perhaps more fundamental, point. It is right that the employers and the teacher unions should have the opportunity to negotiate agreements on pay and conditions. But there are other parties with legitimate interests—notably the Government and the taxpayers. The question of the weight to be attached to the various interests and of how those interests are to be reconciled in the context of new pay machinery, is serious and important.

I am delighted to note that the hon. Member for Blackburn accepts that there is a role for the Government in setting teachers' pay. He recognises that there is a balance to be struck. Any responsible Government must recognise that. We believe that the Bill—the result of much consultation and reflection—does indeed get the balance right.

It is interesting to note that neither the hon. Member for Blackburn nor the hon. Member for Leeds, Central even tried to discuss the core of the Bill, which concerns the machinery for setting pay levels. They did not put forward one serious or constructive suggestion about what they wanted to do. I challenge them to come forward with their proposals in Committee. We shall wait with interest to hear what they have to say.

Most of the debate concentrated on clauses 8 and 9, which cover opting out. My hon. Friends the Members for Dartford (Mr. Dunn), for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) and for Hendon, South mentioned the advantages, and the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) mentioned the problems, which flow from clauses 8 and 9, covering opting out. LEAs and schools already have considerable flexibility to target payments selectively to tackle any local recruitment or retention difficulties, and to reward good teachers and those teachers who take on additional responsibility. That flexibility has increased significantly over the past few years and, as my right hon. and learned Friend said, it will be extended further when the January payment settlement date is reached.

Let us be clear about one thing. Opting out has nothing to do with the volume of resources available to an LEA or a grant-maintained school, but a great deal to do with the allocation and better management of resources at local level. We have in place already a pay structure that gives wide flexibility to reward, recruit and retain. I am sure that the local authorities' negotiators will be looking to maintain and to extend that existing flexibility, but I firmly believe that individual LEAs, which must answer to parents and community charge payers for the effective delivery of the education service in their areas, must be able to go their own way if, and only if, they conclude that the national pay and conditions arrangements do not provide the framework they need.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: The Minister said that, under the Bill, local settlements would not affect the volume of resources. I cannot see why he believes that the national structure would do that anyway. It seems that the Government are setting the volume of resources in advance of national negotiations, so why is it necessary to maintain a ministerial veto, rather than a veto at local level?

Mr. Eggar: A grant-maintained school has a clear budget and it has to look at alternative calls on that budget. Local education authorities are able to deploy resources at a local level. Therefore, it is right that the Government should have a reserve power for the national settlement. That power can be used only at the end of an extremely long process. There has to be a referral back and if that does not satisfy, it must be referred to the interim advisory committee, back to us and then to a negative resolution of the House.

Opposition Members have uttered dire warnings about a future in which there are many different local and regional salary levels and pay structures. I believe firmly that individual local education authorities and grant-maintained schools are best placed to determine how best to respond to local needs and priorities. It may be that some of them will feel that the way forward is to opt out of the national arrangements altogether. They may feel that they should determine the pay and conditions of their teachers at local level. Even at this early stage, one or two local education authorities are thinking seriously about that. I have no doubt that they should be able to make that choice if they so wish.

We are legislating for many years to come and need to provide for the long-term evolution of the system. It would be short-sighted to assume that the national system will always be sufficiently flexible to enable every local education authority and grant-maintained school to respond as it would wish in tackling its needs and difficulties. We have moved a long way over the past three years in devolving to local level decisions about the salaries of individual teachers. As my hon. Friend the Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden) said, the proposals in the Bill are a natural extension of the process upon which we have already embarked.

The hon. Member for Blackburn referred to the loss of teachers from the profession. He claimed that there was a wastage rate of four in every five teachers over a period of five years.

Mr. Straw: No.

Mr. Eggar: He said that only one in five teachers was teaching after five years.

Mr. Straw: The Minister got it wrong. The figures do not come from me but from the Department of Education and Science. I said that, for every three entrants to teacher training, only one is left teaching five years after qualification.

Mr. Eggar: The hon. Gentleman is wrong. He does not bother to check his facts. About 70 per cent. of those entering teaching are still in the profession five years later. Half of the 30 per cent. who are not teaching re-enter the profession at some stage after five years. Those are the facts that have been given to the hon. Gentleman in a briefing from my Department. If he cannot accept the facts, he has failed to do his homework.

Mr. Straw *rose*——

Mr. Eggar: I shall not give way to the hon. Gentleman. He got his facts wrong in his speech and his intervention. He cannot accept the briefing from my Department and would rather accept advice from the unions.

The hon. Member for Blackburn also said that some qualified teachers are not teaching now. They are in what is known as the pit—the pool of inactive teachers. If t hon. Gentleman looks at those behind him, he will see th 57 of his hon. Friends are members of the pit and ha decided for one reason or another that they do not wish continue teaching. I am sure that my hon. Friends wou welcome it if they returned to the classroom, as I am su they will after the next election. I understand why the ho Member for Blyth Valley (Mr. Campbell) looks worried. He must be concerned about the teachi standards that his hon. Friends would make available children. I share his concern.

I was interested to read about the proposals of the ho Member for Leeds, Central to reform teacher training. made fascinating reading. Imitation is the highest form flattery. The hon. Member for Leeds, Central suggest that more practical classroom experience is needed. We a there already. I shall give the hon. Gentleman t opportuntiy to endorse the licensed teacher scheme th was introduced two years ago by willingly giving way him. While he is about it, may I ask him also to endorse articled teachers scheme that was introduced September? Both schemes are based on practi classroom experience. That is exactly what he called for his speech last weekend.

Mr. Fatchett: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Eggar: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman i minute.

The Opposition suggest that there ought to be national core curriculum for teacher training. I refer hon. Member for Leeds, Central to our criteria for approval of courses. They were laid down in 1984 a revised at the end of last year to take account of national curriculum. Why does not he welcome our crite for a core curriculum for teacher training? I hope that will endorse it this evening.

The hon. Gentleman also referred to what he cal competence statements. I hope that he will take opportunity to endorse the criteria that we laid down 1984.

Mr. Fatchett: I am pleased that the hon. Gentlem spent so much time last weekend reading my speech. I had read it in full, he would have recognised that Opposition want agreed levels of competence to re from teacher training. The hon. Gentleman knows t licensed teachers do not possess agreed levels competence.

Mr. Eggar: The hon. Gentleman does not accept logic of his own position. He says that teachers ough have more classroom experience and then, for umpteenth time, he rejects a scheme that is based enti on classroom experience.

The Opposition have had a great deal to say ab resources. We ought, therefore, to look at the fa During the past 10 years, funding per pupil has risen —*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Eggar: The Opposition do not want to recog the fact that during the past 10 years there has been increase of over 40 per cent. in real terms on spending pupil. There has been a 12 per cent. increase in provision for secondary schools, a 17 per cent. increas the provision for primary schools, a 20 per cent. incr

in further education for adults, a 33 per cent. increase for additional special schools, a 58 per cent. increase in expenditure on the under-fives and, for teachers, a real-terms increase in pay of 30 per cent. Those are the facts about resources. The increases in resources are real —unlike the cheap words of the Opposition.

Under the previous Labour Government, teachers' salaries rose by only 6 per cent. Moreover, under the previous Labour Government there was a positive reduction in education programmes. During the five years of the previous Labour Government, spending per pupil fell in real terms. Between 1976 and 1978, there was a 28 per cent. cut in real terms in expenditure on schools. We increased spending on teachers' salaries, and we were not ashamed of doing that.

When the hon. Member for Blackburn speaks of extra resources for education, he adds a little caveat—as resources allow. By that, he means that he is making a series of confetti promises when he knows perfectly well that shadow Treasury spokesmen will not give him the resources. He will not fool the people. We want support for the Bill, and that is what we shall get.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 177, Noes 328.

Division No. 12] **[10 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Bell, Stuart
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Benton, Joseph
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gould, Bryan
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Heal, Mrs Sylvia
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Lambie, David
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maginnis, Ken
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martlew, Eric
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Hara, Edward
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terence
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Martyn Jones.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beith, A. J.
Bellingham, Henry
Bellotti, David
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cartwright, John
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James

Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Sir Charles
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Sir Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worc*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwoo*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwoo*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(He*
Stokes, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder V*
Thompson, Patrick *(Nor*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridling*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'h*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side Nort*
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhil*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Sir George Young and
Mr. David Lightbown.

Question accordingly negatived.

Main Question put forthwith, pursuant to S Order No. 60 (Amendment on Second or Third Re and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time, and commit Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order (Committal of Bills).

School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Bill

[Money]

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—
Motion made, and Question proposed,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Bill, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of—

(a) any expenses of the Secretary of State under that Act, and

(b) any increase attributable to that Act in the sums so payable under any other Act.—*[Mr. Fallon.]*

10.16 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): I am sure that the right hon. Member for Huntingdon (Mr. Major) is being pressed to depart from the Chamber because he must want to know that the money is under close scrutiny. After all, under the Tory Government, he has been responsible for cuts ever since he was Chief Secretary to the Treasury.

The money resolution uses a curious form of words. It authorises any increase in expenditure

"attributable to that Act"—

that is, the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Bill—

"in the sums so payable under any other Act."

That is a broad form of words. Why does the Secretary of State not rely simply on the authority granted by section 79 of the Education Reform Act 1988, which applies to teachers' pay and under which, through negotiations under the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Bill, he is authorised to increase expenditure? As the main source is listed under the financial effects of the Bill, why should the resolution refer to "any other Act"?

What other legislation do the Government have in mind which will be covered by the resolution? The words of the resolution are broad, so we are giving carte blanche to the Government to apply expenditure to any other Act that they may desire to introduce. Perhaps they already have in mind a list of Acts to which the resolution could apply. In that case, they should have listed such legislation in the financial effects of the Bill. That would be a useful explanation to place on the record.

Secondly, schedule 3(3) lists the sorts of expenditure that the Secretary of State is authorised to pay over to the chairman, deputy chairman and members of the advisory committee. The financial memorandum to the Bill makes it clear that the cost of the committee will be offset by disbanding the interim advisory committee. I asked earlier whether the Secretary of State had in mind any increases in the pay and improvements in the conditions of the new committee. If there are significant differences between the money paid to teachers and the payments made to the advisory committee, teachers will be affronted. They are dissatisfied with their pay, not least because it has been removed from a decent pay bargaining framework such as that recommended by the International Labour Organisation, which is affiliated to the United Nations.

We need to know what these people will be paid and what hours they will be expected to work each week. That will give teachers a useful basis for comparison. If the payments are large, the advisory committee will not be independent, because it will be under an obligation to its paymaster in the form of the Secretary of State. The money resolution authorises the Secretary of State to determine those levels of pay, and the House should know what they will be. We should not have to find that information out from press leaks because it has been determined in secret.

The legislation places the negotiations on and recommendations for teachers' pay in the public arena. Everyone will know what the teachers are paid, so we should also know what the advisory committee will be paid.

Naturally, the Minister is a little excited and nervous because he does not know whether he will be a Minister after tonight. I take the view that the right hon. Member for Huntingdon is not clever enough to get rid of him, but one never knows. The Minister of State, who wound up the debate on Second Reading, did not reply to my earlier question, so I hope that the Under-Secretary of State will reply to it now.

10.22 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Michael Fallon): I hope to be able to satisfy my right hon. Friend the Member for Huntingdon (Mr. Major) as well as the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer). The hon. Gentleman mentioned two points which were central to the resolution, so it may be helpful if I explain what the resolution does. First, the expenses of the Secretary of State are simply those concerned with the operation of the advisory committee—the cost of its secretariat, its incidental expenses, any payments made to the chairman or members, and the publication of its report. Neither the chairman nor the members of the committee will be paid —they will receive expenses only, although the chairman may receive a fee per diem.

The advisory committee is likely to cost somewhat less than the interim advisory committee which it replaces because it has a narrower remit and a shorter period in which to report, and it is likely to pay fewer visits to schools.

Mr. Cryer: The Minister said that the Committee members will be paid nothing but expenses, and that is welcome. He also said that the chair and deputy chair will be paid a daily fee. What sort of fee does he have in mind?

Mr. Fallon: The same sort of per diem fee as applies to the interim advisory committee—there is no difference.

The second leg of the money resolution is required under procedures of the House because changes in teachers' pay arising from the new machinery will give rise to increases in local authority expenditure. It also covers the Secretary of State's grant to grant-maintained schools, which provides for all their expenses, including the pay of their teachers. I hope that the hon. Member for Bradford, South will be content with that reply and I commend the resolution to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Teachers' Pay and Conditions

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That the draft Teachers' Pay and Conditions Act 1987 (Continuation) Order 1990, which was laid before this House on 15th November, be approved.—*[Mr. Eggar.]*

10.25 pm

Ms. Hilary Armstrong (Durham, North-West): I suppose it's a funny old world. We have witnessed yet another circus act on the Government Benches, with a new Prime Minister in waiting who must be wondering tonight how he can reconcile his statements as Chancellor of the Exchequer with his commitments over the weekend as a candidate for the position of Prime Minister.

I am quite confident that the right hon. Member for Huntingdon (Mr. Major) will turn his back on those promises and forget about them. One of his commitments was about raising teacher morale, which is important. However, he has been a member of a Government who have denied teachers the right to negotiate their salaries and conditions.

We are here tonight because of that denial of basic rights and opportunities. It is a denial of a right that is allowed to all other local authority personnel, to central Government personnel and even to people at GCHQ.

This is not an abstract point. People in staff rooms around the country feel excluded from having any role in constructing their own working conditions. Hon. Members in this place and even members of the Government would not tolerate that, as was reflected in the way in which Conservative Members behaved over the past few days.

The point is mirrored for teachers by a wide range of other experiences, including a lack of consultation over the national curriculum, over testing and over the whole paraphernalia of the Education Reform Act 1988. The Government constructed that Act so that it would not involve teachers, and the education service is reaping the whirlwind that the Act brought with it. We must now adapt to many of the issues in the Education Reform Act in the way that was predicted precisely because the Government refused to consult and negotiate with teachers.

We are being asked tonight to agree to an order which is directly responsible for low morale. Those who support the order are directly responsible for pushing down morale and for keeping it low. When the 1988 Act was introduced, the Government said that it would be temporary. We are told that a week is a long time in politics, but teachers in the staff rooms have had four years of the Act, and that seems like an eternity.

The 1988 Act has in no sense been temporary. This order seeks to continue something which no one would consider to be temporary. When the 1988 Act was passed, it was said that it would be replaced by an Act that had consent. We have spent today discussing that, and it must be clear to anyone, particularly from the contribution made by my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton South-East (Mr. Turner), that the new School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Bill does not have consent. The Government have not been able to achieve consent, because no one believes that the Government believe in consent. The Government have demonstrated powerfully that they are completely unable to negotiate. The interim advisory committee, introduced by the 1987 a produced some interesting and useful reports, as Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) s even in responding to those reports, the Gove history has been abysmal.

The first IAC report in April 1988 excee Secretary of State's cost limit by 6 per ce Government refused to fund the difference and education authorities had to find the extra money. IAC report rejected regional variations an differentials for teachers of subjects with staff sh Today, the Government made clear what they th that IAC recommendation.

In the second report in February 1989, the se was £80 million above the remit of £350 million. A Government refused to meet the shortfall, £25 mi met by savings in teachers' pension funds and the again, had to be found by local education autho

The third report, in 1990, again recomm settlement above the Government's remit—£133 Again, the Government ducked their responsib refused to meet the settlement agreed by the IAC. they decided on a phased increase, which mea rather than an increase of 9·3 per cent., teacher make do with an increase of 7·1 per cent.

I need hardly remind the House that, des magician-like qualities of the right hon. Mem Huntingdon, inflation is 10·9 per cent. The figur for themselves. I hope that, as someone who is dealing with figures, he will look at the figures a reconcile the contradictions within them, because we who suffer from those contradictions and dif but the children in the schools.

In the remit to the IAC in September, the Secretary of State—I hope that I do not have to again next week—did not give a limit of settleme committee. He directed that the cost of its recom tions should fall within the interquartile range o sector, non-manual settlements. But there overriding question, which the previous Secretary and the present one have not yet answered: Government fully fund the settlement that arises remit that they have given this year's IAC? That —the Government have cash-limited the amo local authorities can spend.

Despite the arguments between us and the some Conservative Members are unhappy to acc all know that teacher morale is low. As a s tonight's edition of the *Evening Standard* show teachers in London have left during the past two The fed-up teachers blame the exodus on poor pay status. The Government must address that iss have a responsibility tonight to assure us that fully fund any recommendation from the IAC.

I have outlined the Government's dismal r date. There has been much discussion today abou morale. The 1990 IAC report said:

"Any profession would be justifiably proud of th commitment on the part of the teachers we have m our school visits in all three years. However, com cannot by itself guarantee the success of the curren It needs to be underpinned by far higher morale tha found."

The IAC recognises that the commitments that and the promises that it tried to elicit from the

of State would not solve the whole problem. But it thought that it was critical that any future pay settlement must be recognised by the Secretary of State and must be funded.

Other Members have spoken of teacher morale. It is not a political point to be thrown across the Chamber. I have to deal with that issue every time I go into a school. I do not try to put teachers down: far too many members of my family and friends are teachers and I value their health as much as I value my own. Last week, the Health and Safety Commission said that teachers probably suffer more stress than people in any other profession. I beg the Secretary of State to take the issue much more seriously than he appears to be prepared to do.

The order continues the work of the IAC. We are debating yet another order, even though, year after year, Secretaries of State have told us that we were debating the last one, and that matters would be sorted out. The Bill rejects many of the main tenets of the IAC reports. The IAC has agreed that a basic necessity is a basic national pay level with local variations, where necessary, on top of the basic amount. For the first time since the war, the Bill will change the whole basis of negotiations. We are being asked to continue the work of a body, one of whose major recommendations has just been rejected by the House.

Several hon. Members spoke about the International Labour Organisation. There is no doubt that the ILO utterly rejected the Government's view as contained in the 1987 Act. Its committee of experts said that the Act was in breach of article 4 of convention 98 on voluntary negotiation, and called upon the Government to modify the legislation to make voluntary negotiations possible. The Government have not modified the Act through the order, and we are being asked yet again to renew the order.

Sometimes the Government admit that teacher morale is low, but that admission depends on which Minister is speaking. They have denied teachers the rights given to other people. The Labour party has been talking about teacher morale for some time, not in order to lower it but to get it recognised. The Government are exploiting the commitment of teachers. Teachers have an enormous commitment to the job and to their children and they deserve our support and recognition. Teachers will soon know what the new Cabinet thinks of them and will see whether the new Prime Minister and his Cabinet are prepared to meet the demands in the IAC report. The Government should at last be prepared to recognise and value teachers with a worthwhile pay settlement.

10.38 pm

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): I do not propose to delay the House because, like many hon. Members, I have already spent more than enough time debating education. All hon. Members must be bitterly disappointed at having to debate the order at all. Everybody wanted matters to move forward more quickly, so that proper pay machinery could be put in place earlier. Liberal Democrats predicted that we would be in the position that we are now in, even though Ministers argued otherwise. That has a certain inevitability about it.

I hope that the Minister will address some specific issues. First, I hope that he will outline the basis and remit within which the IAC will make its decision this year. That is important, given the teacher shortages, the problems with morale and the other difficulties referred to in the earlier debate. We need to know to what extent the IAC is being asked to look at that matter this year.

Secondly, there is the question of full funding or otherwise, which has already been raised. Perhaps the Minister could give the House a clear statement about the Government's commitment to meet the cost of the settlement that may be reached as a result of the IAC's deliberations.

Thirdly—this is also important—last year, the IAC made a recommendation that the government effectively rejected by deciding to phase the implementation instead of introducing it according to the recommendation. The result is the vast cuts in teachers' salaries against inflation during the three years of the IAC's recommendations. Do the Government intend to see a settlement—would they be prepared to see a settlement—that at least matches inflation and ensures that teachers' salaries are restored to their proper level according to the IAC, so that, when the new machinery that we debated earlier is implemented, we do not immediately have to make up for the Government's meanness in the past two or three years?

Finally, since a new Prime Minister will take office tomorrow, who is committed to a thorough review of teachers' salaries, do the Government intend that any account of that commitment should be taken in these deliberations? Have the Government already set in stone what the IAC will do this year or, if the Prime Minister does indeed seek a thorough review of teachers' salaries, will it be possible for any account of that to be taken in the settlement?

10.41 pm

The Minister of State, Department of Education and Science (Mr. Tim Eggar): I shall try to reply to the points raised by the hon. Members for Durham, North-West (Ms. Armstrong) and for Truro (Mr. Taylor). I am delighted that the atmosphere now is slightly less frenetic than 43 minutes ago. I hope that the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr Sedgemore) is now tucked up safely in bed.

The interim advisory committee has been asked to build on the far-reaching improvements it recommended last year. The remit balances market forces against affordability. This is consistent with the Government's approach to pay across the board. It also acknowledges the need to continue improving teacher supply in areas where vacancy rates are a particular cause for concern, notably London and, as many of my hon. Friends said earlier, across the south-east. We have never sought to disguise the fact that there are shortages in certain subjects, as well as in some geographical areas.

The committee has been directed that the cost of its recommendations must fall within the inter-quartile range of non-manual pay settlements in the 12 months to November 1990. This constraint is the same as that which already applies to civil servants and will also have a role in the new permanent negotiating machinery that will be set up under the Bill, the Second Reading of which has just received such overwhelming support in the House. Incidentally, I thank the hon. Member for Truro and his hon. Friends for their support.

[Mr. Tim Eggar]

It is, of course, for the committee to decide what to recommend within that remit, taking account of what the local authorities can afford, but it allows for a very fair settlement to be reached——

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn) *rose——*

Mr. Eggar: I believe in a relaxed style at the Dispatch Box, but at 10.43 pm, after the debate that we have just had and after the week that we have all had, I hope that the hon. Gentleman will forgive me for not giving way to him. I shall be delighted, however——

Mr. Straw: It is only a simple question.

Mr. Eggar: That is exactly what I feared. I know my limitations.

We believe that the Bill allows for a fair settlement for teachers. The remit given to the IAC is, by definition, very fair, and the Government expect it to work within that remit. Of course, education standard spending includes an appropriate allowance to meet any considerations within that remit.

The Government believe that flexible pay systems, which allow the targeting of additional payments to meet specific needs, are the most cost-effective way of addressing any problem of recruitment and retention. The committee's remit for 1991-92 invites it to consider whether local flexibilities should be developed still further. Hon. Members referred to that point. The committee is currently considering evidence from interested parties. My right hon. and learned Friend has asked to receive its report by 18 January.

This time next year, the Teachers' Pay and Conditions Act 1987 will have been repealed. In the meantime, however, we need this order to extend the life of the Act beyond 31 March 1991, so as to pay teachers an increase next year. I commend it to the House and ask that it be approved.

Question put and agreed to.

Ordered,

That the draft Teachers' Pay and Conditions Act 1987 (Continuation) Order 1990, which was laid before this House on 15th November, be approved.

Pharmaceutical Companies (P

Motion made, and Question proposed, That do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Neil Hamilton.]*

10.45 pm

Mr. Andrew Hunter (Basingstoke): Humil to concede that other political develop somewhat overshadow this debate. Ne welcome the opportunity to introduce a brief predicament in which the United Kingdom cal industry finds itself, with particular em profitability and its importance.

My hon. Friend the Minister needs no rem importance of the pharmaceutical industry. source of products which alleviate huma Secondly, in commercial terms it acts as a inward investment into the United Kingdom. a provider of employment. Indeed, in the 197 employment in the industry rose dramatical the industry is an essential dimension to infrastructure of the United Kingdom. That the matter.

Research is the lifeblood of the ph industry, but there can be no research unle sufficient level of profitability. There cannot pharmaceutical industry in the United Kin research is taking place in the United King why I sought a debate on the profitability of

I am sure that my hon. Friend will hav about the importance of the industry. Rec described by Lord Walton of Detchant as "the jewel in our industrial crown."

I remind my hon. Friend that three of th medicines in the world, and seven of the top 2 in origin and development. The United Ki better record in pharmaceutical innovation th country. The top 50 products in the world under half the total prescription medicines those, 27·6 per cent. originate from the Unit which is more than the total figure of 29·8 pe rest of Europe. The United States figure is cent. That is a magnificent record.

It is worth stressing that the Unite pharmaceutical industry provides an expo more than £1 billion per year, compared wit national deficit of £15 billion this year and next year.

In a wide range of medical conditions, the new or improved medicines would alleviate misery—not least the two killers in develope refer to heart disease and cancer, which alo people in the United Kingdom than any ot ailments—nearly one third of a million peop

Advances in research cannot be made profitability to finance research. Only more research and development will help to find n treatments, but the costs of that investment and the returns for innovative companies are

Most important of all for a thriving Unit pharmaceutical industry is patent term resto is, effective patent protection. The 1989 report concluded that, between 1960 and 1 patent life was eroded from 12 years to arou I acknowledge that those are average figures a

is considerable variation around the mean. Nevertheless, that degree of erosion over 25 years gives great cause for concern.

The ranges for other major European countries are somewhat higher, but the same downward trend is evident, though it is greater in the United Kingdom than elsewhere in Europe. My hon. Friend the Minister will be aware of the European Commission's draft regulation, which proposes an effective patent life of 16 years by the granting of "complementary protection certificates." That term was arrived at after careful consideration, and its authors maintain that it strikes the right balance. There is a great discrepancy between that proposed provision and current United Kingdom practice.

In the case of treatments for medical conditions such as multiple sclerosis, which are characterised by long periods of remission and which would therefore require longer periods of evaluation, there could still be no hope of bringing a product to market while any effective patent protection remained. In meeting that and similar situations, the EC directive is ineffective and United Kingdom practice is even more defective.

In the case of the more complex products of biotechnology, one can foresee a much longer product registration approval process. Where the approval process exceeded the life of the patent, no effective patent life would be left.

It may be argued that the Government, while accepting that some action needs to be taken, seem to believe that a patent term of 13 or 14 years would be appropriate. If I am mistaken, the Government have an opportunity, through my hon. Friend the Minister, to correct a false impression. Meanwhile, France and Italy, for example, are proposing a 17-year period, the United Kingdom 13 or 14 years, and the EC 16 years. While such trends persist, the United Kingdom pharmaceutical industry will continue to be at a disadvantage by comparison with its major competitors.

My hon. Friend the Minister will be aware that Dr. Heinz Redwood, a noted health economist, recently stated:

> "The purpose of patent restoration in the 1990s is not to save a relatively prosperous industry from failure but to underpin its resolve and to take a massive scientific and financial risk, in order to produce new drugs which society needs in order to cope with serious gaps in therapy."

With regard to generics and to patent term extension, the profitability of the industry in the United Kingdom has arguably been further threatened by the Government's encouragement of generic prescribing and parallel imports. One reason advanced against supporting the EC regulation is that it would blunt the generic initiative, and prices would rise rapidly. As I shall demonstrate, however, there is little evidence to support that view.

First, let us consider the position in which the pharmaceutical industry now finds itself. On the one hand, it is a research-based industry with an average effective patent life of approximately six years, which is entirely unacceptable. On the other hand, the Government are advocating generic prescribing and the use of the products of the generic industry. The indicative prescribing scheme was the re-writing of working paper IV of the White Paper. There, the Government set out to recommend generic prescribing and to allay any concerns about it. That is a questionable thesis in its own right, but it is profoundly worrying in its implications for the pharmaceutical industry.

Dr. Redwood has developed a hypothetical mod which calculates the effects of the EC proposals on the 100 medicines. Between 1990 and 1996, the annual ex cost would be a mere £10·2 million at 1988 prices—no significant debit, other points considered. In any case, recent NHS reforms, and the pharmaceutical pr regulation scheme will control pricing. I hope that my h Friend will acknowledge that generic extension is in its no El Dorado.

With regard to the profitability of the industry, price control regime has been almost too effective. T return on capital employed on sales to the NHS by industry has reduced from 16 per cent. in 1986 to abou per cent.—an unsatisfactory state of affairs. To take j two comparisons, the return on oil and gas investment h reduced over the same period from 28 per cent. to 16 cent. while that of food retailing remains at about 22 cent. My hon. Friend seems to disagree—I look forward hearing his comments, but I believe that with the NHS a major consumer, return on investment for pharmaceutical industry is arguably inadequate.

As a result of the flexible and encouraging polic pursued during the 1970s and 1980s, the United Kingdo is host to the international pharmaceutical industry. It h been encouraging to see United States and Europe companies expand manufacturing and research facilities the United Kingdom, providing high quality jobs a supporting an already strong scientific infrastructure.

Parent boards of such foreign multinationals are no beginning to have second thoughts about investment in t 1990s. We have a less favourable attitude to patent ter extension. We have a history of adverse legislation—t limited list of 1984, indicative prescribing in 1990, son concern about the workings of pharmaceutical pri regulation, and a generics industry endorsed a encouraged by the Government. We have decreasi profitability. Faced with those issues, and the welcon attitude being displayed in France, Germany and Italy, name but three countries, the future of pharmaceutic industry investment in the United Kingdom must now in doubt.

If we are to retain our lead in pharmaceutical inventio I urge my hon. Friend to review his position on pate term extension before the European Council of Ministe makes its final decision on the proposals. I urge him bear in mind the points that I have tried to make. T United Kingdom pharmaceutical industry is not a lan duck but a bird in flight. The question is whether th Government should inadvertently shoot it down.

10.59 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Heal (Mr. Stephen Dorrell): I congratulate my hon. Friend th Member for Basingstoke (Mr. Hunter) on having th opportunity to introduce the first Adjournment debate the new era. It shows his impeccable sense of timing. H has brought to the attention of the House an issue considerable importance to his constituents and th country. The issue is close to my heart, for in m constituency of Loughborough are based two majo British pharmaceutical companies—Fisons and Riker- and I do not need to be reminded of the importance of th industry as a key supplier to the national health servic and as a major employer and wealth creator for the Britis economy.

[Mr. Stephen Dorrell]

My hon. Friend talked of the "predicament" of the pharmaceutical industry. That is not the word that I would use. As he was at pains to make clear, the British pharmaceutical industry has behind it an almost unrivalled history of success in terms of its capacity to generate new products, wealth and jobs. It was one of the cornerstones of the success of the British economy during the 1980s. My constituency interest in the future of the industry merely adds to my belief and recognition from a Government perspective of the importance of the industry in our total industrial effort.

To illustrate the scale of the industry's success, I can add some statistics to those given by my hon. Friend. The United Kingdom is fifth in the world in terms of the scale of pharmaceutical production. The sales of the British pharmaceutical industry amount to about £5 billion a year, of which £2 billion is exported. The industry employs about 70,000 people directly, never mind those who have jobs as a result of its success. Those employees are substantially better paid than the average employee in British industry. Therefore, it is not merely an employer of labour but an employer of high-paid labour.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Basingstoke was at pains to point out, the industry has a tremendous record in terms of its spend on research and development. A total of 14 per cent. of the entire world spend on pharmaceutical research and development takes place in these islands. My hon. Friend was too modest in his claim that seven of the world's 20 best selling medicines are based on United Kingdom research. I am advised the figure is eight, including the world's No. 1 pharmaceutical product—Zantac—which is a product of Glaxo.

By any definition, the British pharmaceutical industry is not in a "predicament". It is a world-beating industry, setting a pace and performance target that few other industries in this country or elsewhere can match. It is a tremendous success story. As a Minister with a key interest in the industry as a customer and as a representative of a constituency in which it is an important employer, I have asked what circumstances made that success possible. It is clearly in the interests of us all that those circumstances should continue, so that the success story can be maintained.

In considering what made it possible, one thing is clear. That did not happen because of the benign good will of a few civil servants in Whitehall. it is no thanks to the outdated ideas of industrial sponsorship in Whitehall Departments that we have a successful pharmaceutical industry. Its success is based upon high quality management and entrepreneurial decision taking by people in the industry, making the right decisions about the allocation of resources. It is a success story for British management, not a success story for British politicians.

That is the key factor that marked the industry out for success, but the Government cannot close their mind to the fact that the national health service is the largest single customer of the British pharmaceutical industry. As a customer, the Government have an important interest in ensuring its continued strength. Only if the industry continues to be strong can we expect it to continue to undertake the research that is necessary to ensure that British pharmaceutical technology continues to develop and to break new frontiers.

The Government are also properly co wider implications of the success of employment and wealth creation. purchasers from the pharmaceutical i Marks and Spencer is interested to ensur are vigorous, strong and able to conti needs next year as well as this year, Government keen to ensure that the right the continued success of the British industry, both because we rely on its stre needs of the national health service and want to ensure that its wealth-creating underwrite the success of that part of the

What are the key ingredients that success possible? A fair slice of my hon was devoted to the importance of pate new pharmaceutical products, based research. The Government share m recognition that proper patent protectio for an innovative industry. There are few record of innovation to match that of th industry.

I agree with my hon. Friend about t ensuring that there is in place a proper system that recognises the balance tha between the interests of a pharmaceut protect its right to use the fruits of its ow interests of the customer in not having to research three, four or five times over.

My hon. Friend will be aware that th been changes during the last 15 years protection available under patent law. 1977 extended the basic life of a patent from 16 to 20 years. The Copyright, De Act 1988 abolished the concept of prod right. That was an important change i

I agree with my hon. Friend that we the importance of the distinction in pate basic life of a patent from the time that or new active ingredient is patented—the testing process—and the protected mark product, once it is accepted for use as difference arises because of the time that i gain approval for a new compound. The life that is available to the company exploit the product in the marketplace c small proportion of the total length protection. That subject was research las Ross.

We recognise that that phenomenon talk of a patent life of 20 years doe products are available in the marketpla is important to assess the protected mar the total patent life, and to ask whet market life of a new product is becom Touche Ross report, to which my hon. made a contribution to that debate, but of the issue is continuing and I am not in him the conclusions that we have draw

We must not forget the other side of is not true to say that, the moment that out, a product is available for use in the is not true to say that, the moment that the company can no longer exploit th marketplace. There is a considerable

beyond the life of patent protection, during which a company can continue commercially to exploit the results of its research.

My hon. Friend the Member for Basingstoke rightly said that those issues must be addressed in the domestic context and particularly in the context of the Commission's proposals. We are still considering exactly what response we should make, and we shall certainly bear in mind the points that he made.

My hon. Friend touched briefly on the operation of the pharmaceutical price regulation scheme, which I know from constituency experience to be of continuing concern to those charged with operating British pharmaceutical companies. My hon. Friend, and most people in the sector, will recognise that some rules on the exploitation of monopoly products are inevitable. The industry recognises that some rules are inevitable and that they work to its advantage, because it has signed the PPRS, which is a voluntary agreement between the industry and the Government, who represent the national health service, the largest single customer of the industry.

The PPRS is based on the proposition that it is not sensible to try to cost each product in each form of delivery, but more sensible to base our agreement on the concept of return on investment achieved by a pharmaceutical company in the supply of goods to the national health service. My hon. Friend quoted a return on investment of 7 per cent., which is not the figure by which we work. The target returns by which we work under the PPRS are between 17 and 21 per cent., which my hon. Friend will not regard as comparing too badly with the other industries that he used by way of comparison.

We recognise that, if we want to maintain a viable, strong and successful industry, we must ensure tha who operate within it can secure a reasonable mar of return on their investments in the industry, which the targets are fixed that level. From my p experience in industry, I know that they are not unr rates of return to fix in a relatively secure marke must remember that, over and above those rates is t area, whereby a company can keep up to 50 per cer its target profit if it can demonstrate that that extr was generated as a result of specific and iden productivity gains in the supply and production of of products.

My hon. Friend, if I may say so, exaggerated the to which the PPRS makes the production and pharmaceutical products to the national health ser uneconomic business proposition. I do not doubt f moment that we apply downward pressure on through the PPRS—that is its precise purpose—bu realistic scheme that allows a successful industry to a realistic return on the investment made in the prod and sale of pharmaceutical products.

The most important factor is that the Governmen recognise that there is potential and limitation i position. We shall be a responsible, informed purch pharmaceutical products. We want our suppli pharmaceutical products to be viable, successful panies tomorrow. We want this vital British indus continue its record of success into the future. We that primary responsibility for that must rest w management. Our role is that of the responsible purc and we shall seek to continue to discharge it.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at fifteen minutes past Ele

House of Commons

Wednesday 28 November 1990

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

ADELPHI ESTATE BILL

Read the Third time, and passed.

Oral Answers to Questions

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Cyprus

1. **Mr. Haynes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made on the problem of Cyprus.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones): We want to see a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the Cyprus problem. The United Nations Secretary-General's initiative has our strong and active support. The secretary-general's special representative is continuing to pursue separate discussions with all parties to the dispute.

Mr. Haynes: As the Minister is a new boy at the Foreign Office, will he come with me to visit that beautiful island so that he can see its problems at first hand? Tragically, the island is divided and in the north there are foreign troops from the mainland of Turkey, and all sorts of armaments. We need to know where the people missing from the southern part of the island have gone. Therefore, will the Minister come with me to look round to see what we can do about those problems and sort them out once and for all?

Mr. Garel-Jones: Like most hon. Members, I would go to the ends of the earth with the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes). I agree that it is tragic that the island should be divided in that way and that there are several refugee and human rights problems. We think that the best way forward is by supporting the United Nations initiative, and that is what Her Majesty's Government are doing.

Sir Dudley Smith: I know that the Government believe in the rights of minorities, but will my hon. Friend address the problem more positively, because it has dragged on for many years? Is he aware that, but for the robust efforts of President Denktash in northern Cyprus, there would have been mayhem and bloodshed a long time ago?

Mr. Garel-Jones: I reject the proposition that the Government are not addressing the problem robustly. We have committed to the United Nations peacekeeping force 700 British troops, and that underlines the desire of Her Majesty's Government to bring about a peaceful and proper accord that unites the island.

Mr. Anderson: I congratulate Foreign Office Ministers on their apparent survival. The secretary-general's initiative seems effectively to be stalled, or even in retreat, following the recent decision of Mr. Denktash to delegate responsibility for contact with the United Nations to a deputy. Does the Minister appreciate the sense of frustration and impatience in Cyprus at the continued tragic division of that island? Has consideration been given to further initiatives to break the deadlock?

Mr. Garel-Jones: The hon. Gentleman has expressed the frustration that hon. Members on both sides of the House feel about the continued tragic division. We do not believe that the United Nations initiative has run out of steam. It continues to enjoy the full support of Her Majesty's Government.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I shall answer Questions 2 and 6 together. [HON. MEMBERS: "Question 7."] Questions 2 and 6.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Question 6 is about Bulgaria.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I beg your pardon, Mr. Speaker. A question has been withdrawn and the numbering has not been changed.

BBC World Service

2. **Mr. Harris:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement on the future of the BBC World Service.

7. **Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement on the future of the BBC World Service.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: This year's autumn statement provided for real growth of resources for the BBC World Service during the next three years. That will enable it to improve still further the excellent service that it provides.

Mr. Harris: I welcome that answer, but does my hon. Friend accept that the Gulf crisis is just the latest in a long series of international events, which prove beyond doubt the vital importance of the World Service in providing an impartial source of news to so many countries? Does my hon. Friend accept that, as in the case, for example, of one of my constituents whose husband is, unfortunately, a hostage in Kuwait or Iraq, the message service of the World Service is the only link with people in the Gulf in this time of crisis? As we approach Christmas could there possibly be a further increase in the amount of time made available for such messages?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I am happy to endorse my hon. Friend's congratulations to the World Service, which has been especially good during the Gulf crisis. The Arabic service has been increased to 10·5 hours a day and the English service is maintained at 24 hours a day. The Gulf link programme, to which my hon. Friend referred, is invaluable for families in Britain to send messages to their relatives. I am happy to say that in the past two weeks the World Service has extended that programme to 45 minutes

a day, and we hope that that will provide an adequate facility for families to communicate with their relatives before Christmas.

Mr. Bennett: Is my hon. Friend aware that the BBC World Service has more listeners than Voice of America and is excellent value for money? In view of its excellent work last year in broadcasting information to eastern European countries and other formerly totalitarian countries, will he look sympathetically on any applications by the BBC for extra broadcasting to countries that are still non-democratic?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Yes, my hon. Friend is correct. The World Service plays a vital role in giving information to closed societies. It is the most successful of all the overseas broadcasting services. It has 120 million regular listeners, the highest in the world, even though its output is fifth in hours. None the less, in recent years its output has increased and it is now the highest that it has been since the 1950s.

Mr. Home Robertson: Does the Minister recognise the urgent need for more information and entertainment for British forces deployed in the Gulf? Does he further recognise that the World Service and other broadcasting functions could be used most appropriately, to assist those people doing an important job in that area? Will the Minister make a statement on that?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The content of programmes is a matter for the World Service, but I shall ensure that the hon. Gentleman's suggestion and comments are passed on to it.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: As the radio service has proved to be so successful, will the Government look favourably on the suggestion that there should be a BBC world television service as well?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: BBC TV Europe is part of BBC Enterprises, not part of the World Service. Commercial arrangements are for the BBC and we wish it well in its endeavours in that respect.

Mr. Allason: Does my hon. Friend agree that the most important priority must be English language broadcasting around the world and that before we concentrate on some rather obscure third-world languages, we should at least be able to get the right transmitter sites and the right frequencies around the world? For example, is my hon. Friend aware that it is not possible to listen to the World Service in north America between 10 am and 8 pm?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: As my hon. Friend will be aware, during the past 10 years there has been an increase in the audibility programme. It was begun in 1981 to improve audibility and it is almost complete. It has involved expenditure of £100 million or more in 1981 prices so, in that respect, the World Service has done well.

Mr. Kaufman: Will the Minister disregard the idiotic question just asked of him by the hon. Member for Torbay (Mr. Allason)? It is an absurd notion that languages such as Arabic and Chinese are unimportant and should be disregarded and that the peoples of all the countries of the world should be expected to learn idiomatic English. It is important that we provide proper services throughout the world, especially at times of crisis. Will the Government reconsider the Minister's stodgy answers about television services? When I was in the Gulf, and in other places t I was told time and again that people there cannot en impartial television coverage but have to rely on Ca News Network rather than the BBC's high-qua broadcasts. It is time that the Government changed th policy and offered proper financing for a world televis service.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: No, I cannot accept either of right hon. Gentleman's suggestions. I am sure that h aware that English is the lingua franca in many parts of world, and that it is immensely important to maint English language broadcasting. Nevertheless, my h Friend the Member for Torbay (Mr. Allason) was advocating a cut in World Service foreign langua programmes. As to the right hon. Gentleman's secc point, ITN has started a commercial world televis service without making use of public funds. If ITN can so, that must be the way forward.

Romania

3. **Mr. Irvine:** To ask the Secretary of State for Fore and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement the progress of reform in Romania.

13. **Mr. Nicholas Winterton:** To ask the Secretary State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he make a statement on the progress of reform in Roma

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwea Office (Mr. Douglas Hogg): Romania has made so progress on democratic reform since the grave setback June. We are also encouraged by the start of econo reform. However, we urge the Romanian Government press ahead with further moves to transform Romania i a genuine free-market democracy.

Mr. Irvine: Does my hon. and learned Friend agree t it is important to make it clear to the Roman Government that the more thoroughgoing their imp mentation of political, democratic and economic refor the greater will be the amount of aid Romania can exp to receive from Britain and other western countries?

Mr. Hogg: I could not have put the position clea myself. At my recent meeting with the Roman ambassador, I took the opportunity to make precisely same point.

Mr. Winterton: I apologise for my lack of voice, wh I am sure will be welcome—[HON. MEMBERS: "He hear."]—in some parts of the House. Will my hon. a learned Friend tell the Romanian Government that deplore the continuation of undemocratic procedures that country and that no aid can be provided until refo is genuinely under way? In that connection, certainly aid should be made available until the media are accessi to opposition parties and other democratic groups.

Mr. Hogg: This is the first time in my life that I h had some difficulty in hearing my hon. Friend the Mem for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton). His substantive poi are wholly correct. As to the important issue of the mec the Romanian press is fairly free, but there is yet m progress to be made in respect of television and radio. hon. Friend is right to say that more progress must

made also with economic liberalisation and political reform before the British Government would give aid to Romania.

Mr. Flynn: Does not the Minister see a great danger in the policy suggested by the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton), in that if Romania were to be cut off, it might return to the dark days of isolation that it suffered under Ceausescu? The Government have claimed in a ludicrous way all the responsibility for the welcome changes that have occurred in introducing democracy to eastern bloc countries. They should acknowledge also that, in addition to the great difficulties that those countries face in creating new economies, democracy and independence, they are confronted by problems arising from the Gulf crisis, including oil shortages, and a collapsing Soviet economy. Unless the newly democratised countries receive our support, they will face a very harsh winter.

Mr. Hogg: The hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) was rather unfair to my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton). The hon. Gentleman will be pleased to know that giving humanitarian aid, either bilaterally or through the European Commission, is not subject to the criteria that we discussed earlier. There is a balance to be struck. The general view is that one should not extend aid of the type that we have been discussing unless there is clear evidence of progress towards political reform and economic liberalisation. It is most certainly true that Romania has made progress in both areas, but our own judgment—it is shared by the G24 meeting that took place at the end of October—is that sufficient progress has not yet been made.

Middle East

4. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next plans to meet the Israeli Foreign Minister to discuss the middle east peace process.

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Douglas Hurd): I met the Israeli Foreign Minister on 16 October. We discussed middle east issues, including the peace process. I have no firm plans to meet Mr. Levy again, but we agreed to stay in closer contact in future.

Mr. Marshall: Does my right hon. Friend agree that peace will come to the middle east only when Saddam Hussein is forced to disgorge his gains and give up his nuclear potential and stock of chemical weapons? Will he remind those who seek to appease that tinpot dictator that such a course of action would not provide peace in the middle east, but would merely encourage other dictators elsewhere in the world to engage in acts of aggression?

Mr. Hurd: I hope to make a statement after Question Time on that issue, but I agree with the thrust—*[Interruption.]*—the thrust of what my hon. Friend said. I am not sure that people in this country are yet fully aware of the test of the international community's will that will be involved in meeting the objectives that my hon. Friend rightly set out.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Is the Secretary of State aware that constant incursions into Israel from neighbouring states will not be the way to encourage the Israeli people to support peace moves? Will he make it clear in his talks with Arab nations, as well as with the Israelis, that this country supports the maintenance of peace, and we certainly support the integrity of Israel's borders?

Mr. Hurd: Israel is entitled to security behind confirmed, secure borders. I agree with the hon. Lady that the sort of killings that have again been reported in the past few days—for example, on the border between Israel and Egypt—can serve no purpose whatever, except to retard the peace process. Equally, it is important that the Israeli Government should understand that the security of Israel cannot reasonably rest for ever on the occupation of the west bank, the Gaza strip or indeed, in our view, east Jerusalem. So neither the occupation nor the violence against the occupation from across the borders of Israel in any way helps the matter.

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend: Bearing in mind the fact that the Government correctly recognise the right of self-determination of the Palestinian people, would not it be sensible for the Government also to support the concept of a Palestinian state, bearing it in mind that that would be the logical conclusion of such self-determination?

Mr. Hurd: It might be—but I believe that it is more sensible and more logical to support the right to Palestinian self-determination without advocating a specific outcome. We have never specifically advocated a Palestinian state, as opposed to other conceivable outcomes that have been canvassed, such as a confederal link with Jordan. I do not think that it is for us to specify that. We have said that the right of self-determination exists and that it will have to be respected as part of a comprehensive and negotiated settlement, which must also include provision for the security of Israel.

Mr. Kaufman: May I welcome the right hon. Gentleman back to the Dispatch Box. The number of votes cast for him yesterday was a reflection not on him, but on the intelligence and discernment—or lack of them—of his right hon. and hon. Friends—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Holt: That is out of order.

Mr. Speaker: It may have been out of order but it was very human.

Mr. Kaufman: May I ask—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kaufman: The unruliness among Tory Members would make one think that they were still trying to get rid of the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher).

Will the right hon. Gentleman join me in deploring the deaths of Israelis and Palestinians over the past few days? Does he agree that the deaths of young people on both sides of the divide are unnecessary and pointless but will go on taking place until the peace process gets under way? Does he further agree that those who stand in the way of the peace process must take their share of responsibility for the continuing loss of life? Will he urge the Israelis to see sense and take part in the peace process?

Mr. Hurd: I am obliged to the right hon. Gentleman, but I have always found his compliments rather more damaging than his criticisms. Again, I agree with the basic thrust of his final point. In my answer to the hon. Member

for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody), I deplored the killings that have taken place recently. It is clear that the sporadic acts of violence by whomsoever committed are retarding the process because they make it more difficult for reasonable people to come together and negotiate. I agree with the right hon. Gentleman about that. Once the aggression against Kuwait is reversed, the international community has to make a fresh effort to seek a solution to the Arab-Israel dispute. That will involve fresh thinking by the Palestine Liberation Organisation, the Arab states and the Israeli Government.

Bulgaria

6. **Mr. Stern:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any plans to visit Bulgaria.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has no plans to visit Bulgaria at present.

Mr. Stern: I am grateful to my hon. and learned Friend for that reply. If he or his right hon. Friend has an opportunity to visit Bulgaria in the near future, will he advise whichever political party has failed to avoid taking power that week that the continual shilly-shallying and niggling while the economy collapses is doing no good to the country's reputation and risks losing the good will that was gained on its rapid transition to democracy earlier this year?

Mr. Hogg: We are anxious to see Bulgaria move fast towards a process of economic liberalisation and political reform. I suspect that that involves a high degree of bipartisanship within the country. That is the observation that I would put to Bulgarian Ministers and officials should I meet them. Clearly, a bipartisan approach to such policies will enhance the country's reputation within the international community and domestically.

Mr. Tredinnick: At a time when unity is on the minds of Conservative Members, will my right hon. Friend accept my congratulations on the great contribution that he has made to unity in the past 24 hours? Does my hon. and learned Friend agree that the way to unify both sides of the House in the European currency debate is the hard ecu, which offers——

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is about Bulgaria.

Mr. Tredinnick: Does my hon. and learned Friend agree that were Bulgaria to join the European Community, the hard ecu would be of great relevance to it?

Mr. Hogg: I have received many compliments in my life, and those that I cherish most were made indirectly and unintentionally. But I do not think that I have ever contributed to unity in this place or anywhere else. If my hon. Friend meant my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, I entirely agree.

Drugs Trade

8. **Mr. David Martin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what support is being given to the international offensive against the drugs trade.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We play a leading role in the fight against drugs, not only through direct assistance to countries such as Colombia, but through our participatio in the activities of the United Nations, the Europea Community and the Council of Europe.

Mr. Martin: Will my hon. Friend confirm that w continue to enjoy the closest possible co-operation wit the United States of America in combating this evil trade Will he highlight any recent successes, especially in th Caribbean and the dependent territories?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We co-operate fully with the Unite States authorities in drug enforcement. We have had som particular success in the British dependent territories fo which we must take direct responsibility. I am happy to te my hon. Friend that in the British Virgin Islands i November, 614 kg of cocaine were confiscated, and in S Vincent in October, 317 kg of cocaine were confiscate

Mr. Corbett: Those finds show not success but growin amounts of cocaine washing round the world. What step are the Government taking to encourage co-operation b the nations of eastern Europe and the Soviet Union? Th fact that their borders are more open makes it easier t smuggle drugs into this country.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The hon. Gentleman is correct: w must pursue further contacts with the Soviet Union an eastern Europe. We are taking a lead in the bilater contacts with eastern Europe on drugs, and I am happy t tell the hon. Gentleman that plans are under way for east-west Europe ministerial conference on drugs in Osl next spring.

Kuwait

9. **Mr. Andrew MacKay:** To ask the Secretary of Stat for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make further statement on the future of Kuwait.

Mr. Hurd: I hope to make a fuller statement aft questions, but I can tell my hon. Friend that in accordanc with the Security Council resolutions we remai committed to bringing about the restoration of Kuwait independence and its legitimate Government. We welcom the outcome of the Kuwaiti people's conference in Ta' which agreed a framework for future political advanc ment in Kuwait.

Mr. MacKay: Does my right hon. Friend agree that th one happy affair in this tragic circumstance has been th role of the United Nations, particularly that of th Security Council? It is encouraging for the new worl order that is developing that its permanent members hav agreed to so many positive resolutions.

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend is right. There is a chanc that the Security Council will establish itself in the role fo which its founders designed it—as the supreme politic authority of the international community which can tak decisions, as opposed to simply uttering decisions, that ar respected. We are not there yet, but my hon. Friend is rig that there is a chance.

Mr. Ron Brown: Surely Saddam Hussein cannot be a that bad if he hates Thatcherism. As that lady has parte with her philosophy to stand in Dallas or elsewhere, migh the House look at the issue more clearly? Saddam Husse makes sense in some respects. he says that there must b dialogue, settlement and a peaceful solution to a very b

problem. He says that, but, more important, the British community there, whom I met a short time ago, also say it. Does the Secretary of State agree that they want the British Government to achieve some solution which makes sense without going to war, because war would be costly in human and economic terms? What will the Secretary of State——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member has asked his question.

Mr. Brown: It is important to people in this country and, more important, to people——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman's question is too long.

Mr. Hurd: To say that the hon. Gentleman's conduct and remarks on this matter are silly is to pay him a compliment. Labour Front-Bench spokesmen are following the tradition of the Labour party, which believes in collective security. In the days of the League of Nations, that sometimes led the Labour party into great difficulty. Now, when the Security Council is beginning to make collective security real, is the time for all people who genuinely believe in an international order to rally to its support. In place of that, and not just today, the hon. Gentleman has been blurring the issue. He has, with others, been helping to give the aggressor the idea that the issue can be confused and that somehow he can go away with part of his spoils. The hon. Gentleman is doing no service to peace by the line that he takes.

Sir Jim Spicer: In the context of Kuwait today, will my right hon. Friend do all in his power to ensure that our poor citizens who are in hiding in Kuwait know from him and from the House that we view their situation with horror and that we shall do all in our power to ensure that this wretched man is thrown out of Kuwait at the earliest opportunity?

Mr. Hurd: The position of the approximately 450 British citizens who are now in hiding in Kuwait weighs daily on all of us who know about their situation. That is one reason why Her Majesty's ambassador in Kuwait remains at his duties, despite the difficulties. My hon. Friend is entirely right. The messages and the views that we receive from these, our fellow citizens, are exactly the opposite of the view expressed by the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Leith (Mr. Brown).

Mr. Redmond: The Secretary of State will agree that, after a conflict, the victors and the vanquished get round the table to discuss solutions to the problems. If we want a peaceful solution, it is obvious that a dialogue must take place. Will the right hon. Gentleman consider Colonel Gaddafi's seven-point plan for starting a dialogue to find a solution to the middle east problem?

Mr. Hurd: No one in his senses has any wish or appetite for war as a solution to this problem. There is a peaceful solution and it lies entirely in the hands of President Saddam Hussein. He has to comply fully with the resolutions, not of the President of the United States or the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, but of the Security Council of the United Nations.

Consular Services

10. **Mr. Amess:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made to his Department on the quality of its consular services; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office—and individual consular officers—receive many appreciative letters from British travellers whom they have helped when in difficulty overseas.

Mr. Amess: Although I recognise the excellent help that our consular services provide to deal with urgent cases, does my hon. Friend agree that, because of increasing travel abroad, some of the relatively minor matters that are brought to their attention have placed a strain on them? Does he agree that one way of dealing with the matter would be to encourage self-reliance and to encourage people to take out individual insurance policies?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: In 1989, 30 million people travelled from Britain abroad, 7 million of them to Spain. Six million British citizens live overseas. My hon. Friend is correct that, inevitably, the great growth in travel imposes strains on the consular services. I emphasise that in cases of great need and bereavement, the consular service is a magnificent service which is always there to help, but my hon. Friend is right that people must look after themselves in dealing with small problems, particularly by taking out insurance.

Mr. Beggs: Was the first secretary at the British embassy in Washington representing Government policy on Northern Ireland when he called for sacrificial lambs, thereby implying that the Fair Employment Commission in Northern Ireland should discriminate against innocent employers?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We are looking into that report, but it sounds as though it is distorted.

Antarctica

11. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the Government of Australia regarding their proposals for designating the Antarctic a wilderness park.

17. **Mr. McKelvey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the recent conference in Santiago on the future of Antarctica.

Mr. Garel-Jones: We have had no discussions with the Government of Australia regarding their proposals for designating Antarctica a wilderness park.

The Australian high commissioner and the French ambassador called on me on 30 October to deliver their Governments' joint proposals for a new convention for the protection of the Antarctic environment. Officials from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and other Departments are currently attending the 11th special consultative meeting of the Antarctic treaty parties in Vina del Mar, Chile, and it is likely that discussion of designating Antarctica a world park will take place there.

Mr. Banks: The Minister has the well-deserved reputation of being one of the most Machiavellian Members of the House. He may be able to deceive half the Cabinet about his true voting intentions—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. This sort of thing takes up a lot time, and it has nothing to do with the question.

Mr. Banks: —but I do not think that he should try to deceive the British people. A statement was made before the Chile conference, giving a clear indication that the British Government would support the proposal to turn the Antarctic into a wilderness park but what has been said so far at the Chile conference clearly demonstrates that that is not the Government's position. They still support the extraction of minerals from the Antarctic.

What is the Government's true position? Is it to be a wilderness park or the extraction of minerals? The Minister cannot take it both ways.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The position of Her Majesty's Government is to attempt to seek consensus in regard to Antarctica. We have made it perfectly clear that, to achieve that, we are prepared to listen to all the options put forward by other signatories of the Antarctic treaty.

Mr. Jacques Arnold: Will my hon. Friend give us some more detail about the existing convention on the regulation of Antarctic resource activities—CRAMRA—and how it uses international consensus to save the Antarctic environment, especially from mineral extraction?

Mr. Garel-Jones: It may be worth reminding the House that CRAMRA was introduced by consensus; it was not a departure introduced by the British Government. It has been agreed to by 18 of the signatory parties. We have made it clear, however, that if consensus on this matter no longer lies with CRAMRA, we shall attempt to be the focus of a new consensus to protect the environment.

Dr. Thomas: I am sure that the Minister will accept that a consensus is achieved when the parties propose various stances. He still has not told us what the Government's position is. What is it?

Mr. Garel-Jones: As the hon. Gentleman will know, the conference in Chile was called by Britain to protect the environment. I think that the House should understand that Britain has not been dragged to the conference—indeed, Britain called it.

We have already presented our own protocol for environmental protection which covers environmental impact assessment, tourism, waste disposal, marine pollution and habitat protection. As I think the House knows, all those issues pose an immediate threat to the environment in Antarctica. I am sure that the House will be pleased to learn that the protocol presented by the British delegation has already received a great deal of support from 10 consultative parties, as well as from the five proposing countries. It should be clear that the first thing that Britain has done in the conference is address the immediate threat posed by pollution to the environment in Antarctica.

The threat posed by mining exists, but it is not an immediate one; the immediate threat to Antarctica is caused by tourism, oil pollution and so forth. As I said, if there is no consensus around CRAMRA, Britain the lead in trying to find a way of achieving cons this difficult issue.

Mr. Bellingham: As my hon. Friend is the Mini responsibility for the polar regions, he will be inte hear that recently I received a large petition f constituents who would like Antarctic to be turn wilderness park. Is he aware that many c constituents expressed support and approval positive and constructive attitude that my hon. Fr shown?

Mr. Garel-Jones: I am grateful to my hon. Fri to many hon. Members and members of the pu have put their views to the Government. It is imp stress that those views have, I hope, enabled us t the Government's position more clearly to the ma Members who take an interest in the matter and, them, to members of the public.

Mr. Foulkes: Is not it true that the Minister received a relatively modest welcome as a new b the Foreign Office from the organisations concern the Antarctic when he said that he had no rigid c to a world park, now appears to have been no Foreign Office officials? His delegate in Chile put a plan which does not include a mining arrangements for enforcement. Will the Minister the Dispatch Box, re-assert his authority? He say is prepared to listen. Will he now talk to the A Government and support the idea of an Antarct park? If he does not, the next Labour Governm

Mr. Garel-Jones: I recognise, of course, that th issue is difficult and that it may run for some tim will have to run for a considerable time before Gentleman and his party have any say in the ou

The proposal that our delegation put forward del Mar seeks to address the immediate enviro threats to Antarctica. As I said, that proposal see gathering consensus around it. It is true that th issue must also be resolved, but we know of no o world who is intending to mine or is interested i in Antarctica. Therefore, although that issue is im it is not as great a threat as the immediate enviro threats. We have put forward our proposals. certainly tackle the mining issue with an entir mind and we will listen to any proposals arou consensus may be seen to gather.

Japan (Whaling)

12. **Mr. Amos:** To ask the Secretary of S Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will Japanese Foreign Minister to discuss the c slaughter of whales, dolphins and porpoises, in de the international moratorium.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Japanese Government aware of our views on the killing of whales, dolp porpoises.

Mr. Amos: I am grateful to my hon. Friend reply, but will he have another meeting with the Minister and make it even clearer to him that w deceived by their rapacious, duplicitous and selfis in killing whales because we know that they a

them not for scientific research but for human consumption? Will my hon. Friend tell the Japanese Minister that we will not allow Japan to continue to fly in the face of world opinion on this very important ecological and environmental matter?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Government very much share my hon. Friend's views about the undesirability of the Japanese position. On two previous occasions in the past two years we co-sponsored resolutions at the International Whaling Commission calling on Japan to reconsider its programme. We feel that that is the best forum in which to pursue our objectives. I have no doubt that we will adopt a similar position, should circumstances continue to warrant it, at the next International Whaling Commission meeting in May.

Mr. Flannery: The Minister outlined some of the facts and referred to our contacts, but he failed to answer the question. We have great connections with Japan and the Japanese have many factories here and contacts with this country. Will the Minister use his influence to prevail upon the Japanese in a friendly manner to stop killing these noble animals just for profit? That is what they are doing.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Japanese are well aware of our views, which we continue to express. My point is that if we make our views known at the next commission meeting, we shall have the support of other people and maximum pressure will be brought to bear.

Mr. Robert Banks: Is not this slaughter utterly disgraceful? Views and representations are having no effect on the Japanese. Is not it time for countries such as Britain to take direct action by starting to ban certain products from Japan until the Japanese obey the moratorium?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My hon. Friend is not quite right. In many areas the pressure that we have brought to bear on the Japanese Government has undoubtedly paid dividends. We expressed our concern about Dall's porpoises to the Japanese Government. In 1989, as a result of a report from the International Whaling Commission scientific committee, the Japanese catch of Dall's porpoise was unsustainable and the Japanese have now reduced the number that they catch. Our pressure is beginning to bear fruit and we shall proceed in the way that I have outlined.

Palestine

14. **Ms. Primarolo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last made representations to the Israeli authorities about the arrest and detention of Palestinians in the occupied territories.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: During the visit of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to Israel in October, he put to members of the Israeli Government our position on the treatment of Palestinians in the occupied territories. We have made clear our concern about the recent detention of three Palestinian leaders: they should be charged or released. I made this plain to the Israeli ambassador last week, together with our view that administrative detention is unacceptable.

Ms. Primarolo: I am grateful to the Minister for that answer. However, will he again press the Israeli authorities specifically about the three prominent Palestinians who have been arrested without charge and gaoled without trial in circumstances that continue to inflame the already difficult situation in the west bank and Gaza? At this time of pressing for peace in the region, we should make it clear to the Israeli authorities that administrative detention is not a way to deal with people whom they believe may have committed crimes.

Mr. Hogg: I agree with what the hon. Lady said about administrative detention. I do not think that it is right, as I told the Israeli ambassador last week and as I shall do so again should convenient and appropriate circumstances arise. People who are held should be either charged or released. The process of administrative detention is not conducive to peace or to reconciliation.

Mr. Soames: Was my hon. and learned Friend able to garner from the Israeli ambassador any reason why the Israelis—who, after all, must know more about the terror of persecution than any other race on earth—should treat the Palestinians in such a contemptible manner?

Mr. Hogg: The Israeli ambassador advanced a number of arguments, but, in my view, the arguments in favour of administrative detention were unpersuasive and unacceptable.

Middle East

15. **Mr. Home Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the implementation of United Nations resolutions affecting the middle east.

Mr. Hurd: The Security Council resolutions are crucial for peace and stability in the middle east. The vast majority of members of the international community, including Britain, have confirmed their intention to comply with the resolutions on the Gulf crisis. Once the Iraqi aggression has been reversed, we shall play our full part in the Security Council to carry forward the search for a just and durable solution to the Arab-Israeli dispute.

Mr. Home Robertson: Does the Secretary of State accept that all the resolutions—those involving Palestine as well as those relating to the Gulf—must be implemented if there is to be stability in the middle east and that it is reasonable to set deadlines? Nobody wants a war—not even on a dry Saudi hogmanay. Having visited the Gulf area with the Select Committee on Defence and seen for myself the firepower that is now ranged against the Iraqi occupation forces in Kuwait, may I urge the Foreign Secretary to do everything in his power to convince Saddam Hussein that his position is indefensible in every imaginable sense of that word and that he must now withdraw if he is to preserve peace in that part of the world?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman's question is helpful. That is precisely the point. All the efforts, sometimes well-meaning efforts, to blur the position are fading away. The hon. Gentleman's remarks after his visit to the desert show that the issue is becoming clearer: either Saddam Hussein must leave Kuwait in peace or he will be forced out.

Mr. Favell: I know that my right hon. Friend is acutely aware that the families of hostages in Iraq and Kuwait are suffering hardship. Do the Government have any plans to relieve their financial burden?

Mr. Hurd: We are trying to assist both the hostages and their families. We are in close touch with the Department of Social Security. In addition, I have been in close touch, for example, with the chairman of British Telecom about telephone calls. We are helping the Gulf Support Group, organised by my hon. Friend the Member for Kingswood (Mr. Hayward). We have our own Gulf support centre in the Foreign Office. We are always open to ideas by means of which we can give further help, but the help that we are giving to relieve anxiety and, indeed, stress is already substantial.

Iran

19. **Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the United Kingdom's relations with Iran.

Mr. Hurd: We restored relations with Iran on 27 September on the basis of mutual respect and non-interference in each other's affairs. As a result, the British embassy in Tehran opened on 28 October and the Iranian embassy here opened on 2 November.

Mr. Coombs: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that in the past week no fewer than 700 parliamentarians from throughout the world, including 140 from Britain, have issued a condemnation of the Iranian Government for persistent human rights violations? Will he also confirm that within the past month alone, no fewer than 116 official executions have been admitted by the Iranians, to add to almost 450 further executions this year, some of them carried out in the most bestial manner? Will he do what he can in the United Nations and elsewhere to make the Iranian Government understand that such human rights abuses are not acceptable anywhere in the world, particularly by reference to Islamic law?

Mr. Hurd: As my hon. Friend knows, recently the United Nations special representative, Mr. Galindo Pohl, issued a new report covering some of the points that my hon. Friend mentioned. We are now considering, as we must, with our European colleagues, what line we should take when the report comes to the third committee of the United Nations general assembly which deals with human rights issues. However, I hope that my hon. Friend will accept the seriousness with which we take the matter.

Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe

20. **Mr. Archer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether, at the forthcoming conference on security and co-operation in Europe, he will propose a limitation of arms sales to the developing world.

22. **Mr. Atkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the outcome of the conference on security and co-operation in Europe summit in Paris on 19 to 21 November.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Arms sales are not within the scope of the agreements endorsed at the CSCE summit in Paris on 21 November, but we maintain strict controls on all arms exports.

We welcome the adoption by the CSCE summit of the Paris charter. It expresses a universal commitment by all the CSCE states to the principles of democracy, to rights and to economic liberty, and sets out a new s of CSCE activity. My right hon. Friend the Mem Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher) gave the House an acc the CSCE summit in her statement to the House la

Mr. Archer: May I direct the hon. and Gentleman's mind to the question? Is not there a that manufacturers whose markets are shrin Europe and north America may be looking markets among developing countries? Does he ag they will destabilise those areas where, in any ever should be other priorities for the resources?

Mr. Hogg: The right hon. and learned Ge makes a perfectly fair point, but it is not best dealt the CSCE, not least because several of the countr which we are most preoccupied—for example, Ir not party to that process.

Mr. Atkinson: As so much of the work parliamentary assembly of the Council of complements that of the CSCE, and as the Co Europe now includes 31 out of 32 European CSCI should not my hon. and learned Friend look no than the Council of Europe as the proposed new assembly of Europe, to which we could welcome th American parliamentarians who are currently in taking part in the North Atlantic Assembly?

Mr. Hogg: My hon. Friend is a distinguished of the Council of Europe and I understand wh saying. There are, however, essential differences the proposed assembly of Europe and the Co Europe. One important distinction is that the mem of the Council of Europe is not the same as tha CSCE; for example, the United States is not a part Council of Europe. Another important distinctio the charter of Paris is, essentially, a political ag and doctrine rather than a legal one, when agreements that underpin the Council of Europe strictly legal obligations.

Iraq (Hostages)

21. **Mr. O'Hara:** To ask the Secretary of S Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what provis currently being made for the sustenance, comf welfare of British hostages in Baghdad and their in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Hurd: The embassy in Baghdad has so more than 100 bags of comforts to the hostages in Kuwait and delivered more than 30 bags to those to Baghdad to meet wives visiting from the Kingdom. The contents include beer, cigarettes, to vitamins, books and writing materials. In London set up a post office box that families can use to wri hostages and communities in Iraq and Kuwait. working with the British Red Cross to set up a sy send parcels from families in Britain.

The Foreign Office Gulf families support centr in regular touch with families and works closely Gulf Support Group, providing advice and help.

Mr. O'Hara: Is the Secretary of State aware of t hardship faced by some families of hostages? In dawn of compassion that was at least suggested

election campaign for the leadership of the Conservative party, will he prevail upon his colleagues in the Government to redouble efforts to secure the comfort of hostages' families, especially their ability to maintain telephone communications with their relatives in Baghdad?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman does not need to give that edge to his question. I am conscious of the valid point he makes. I appreciate that the hon. Gentleman is talking about the families here, rather than the hostages in the Gulf. The Gulf families support centre in the Foreign Office acts as a first point of contact for families facing problems. Representatives from the Department of Social Security are on hand to ensure that any requests for help are dealt with promptly. I accept that the families support provisions are not lavish, but if they are properly and quickly administered they ensure that families do not suffer serious deprivation as a result of loss of income.

Middle East

3.31 pm

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Douglas Hurd): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement on developments in the middle east since I did so on 24 October.

The international coalition is holding firm. Our objectives remain: the full and unconditional withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Kuwait; the restoration of the legitimate Government of Kuwait; and the release of all hostages. President Saddam Hussein continues to show little sign that he intends to comply with the will of the international community and withdraw. He continues to rebuff the United Nations, to strengthen his military position in Kuwait, to destroy Kuwait's fabric and national identity, and to manipulate the fate of British and other citizens trapped in Iraq and Kuwait.

Only by intensifying all the pressures at our disposal —diplomatic, economic and military—can we persuade him that he has no alternative to withdrawal. Sanctions are being applied rigorously. We hope that the existing pressures will suffice to persuade Saddam Hussein to withdraw. If they are not sufficient, we need to convince him that the military option is a serious one. The option for peace is in his hands. No one does any service by blurring the choice before him.

For that military option to be fully credible, the international community must show that it has the political will to exercise it. That is why the Security Council is expected to meet at ministerial level within the next few days and vote on a resolution authorising "all necessary means"—that is to say, including force—to be used to ensure Iraqi compliance with Security Council resolution 660 and later resolutions. The resolution now being finalised will include a date—probably in the first half of January—by which time Iraq is required to comply in full with those resolutions. The House will see that it does not follow from that that military action will follow immediately thereafter—nor indeed that military action will necessarily take place. The purpose of the grace period is to allow Saddam Hussein an opportunity in which he can safely withdraw from Kuwait and release the hostages. If he does not do so, he must face the possibility of military action and certain defeat.

As questions have illustrated, we remain anxious for the well-being of the many hundreds of British hostages and other citizens who remain in Iraq and Kuwait. Some have been released through the intervention of political figures and relatives. We understand the suffering of the families and the humanitarian motives of most of those who go to Iraq. But President Hussein exploits those visits for his own unacceptable ends, and I believe that the international community is, and must remain, united in resisting that blackmail.

With tension increasing in the region, we are keeping under constant review our advice to British communities in other parts of the Gulf. We are now advising those living in the eastern region of Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Bahrain, with children in Britain, not to bring them to the area, but to spend the Christmas holiday here, and for dependants to remain outside the Gulf until the situation becomes clearer. That does not mean that we foresee hostilities around that time—the Christmas holiday—but it is sensible to minimise the number of dep region when we are entering a critical pha House will agree.

I should like to report a positive politi September we announced the resumption Iran. We are now resuming relations immediate effect. The respective heads sections in London and Damascus w d'affaires pending the exchange, when ambassadors. We have received fro Government assurances that Syria wi strenuous efforts to obtain the release of we British, hostages in Lebanon and confirm rejects acts of international terrorism and against the perpetrators of such acts whic by convincing evidence. We have also ha account of the Syrian position on the Hind not been entirely easy, but I am glad tha possible to overcome the differences betwe Syria.

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, G the right hon. Gentleman for responding t a statement. We regard the decision to re relations with Syria as logical. We w commitment to reject acts of terrorism ar to fulfil that commitment not simply emphatically, in action.

When I visited Syria last July, I rece from the Vice-President and Foreign Mi Government would do everything possibl the release of British hostages in Lebano that President Bush had written to them r for their help on behalf of American hos diplomatic relations have been resume United Kingdom Prime Minister write President Assad on behalf of the British

Since the Iraq-Kuwait crisis began nea ago, the Labour party, the constitution o it to support the United Nations, has bas to the crisis on support for the decision Nations—sanctions and their enforcemer air blockades and the release of all hos made it clear that we believe that sanctions the maximum time to work, and that rema

If military force were to be contem insisted that any such action should have the House on 7 September

"the clear and unquestionable authority Nations charter."—[*Official Report*, 7 Sept 177, 892.]

We have repeatedly put strongly to the view that a legalistic reliance on article Nations charter would not be sufficient jus use of force. That being so, while we co that sanctions should be given maximu and while we ardently pray that the milit taken up and a war which could be hor must be avoided if at all possible, we r Council resolution of the sort described Secretary as fulfilling the stipulations repeatedly laid down since 2 August.

Yesterday, President Gorbachev's sp Ignatenko, said in Moscow:

"Our country will vote for language w clear-cut deadline for withdrawal from Ku hostages."

Will the Foreign Secretary confirm that the insertion of a deadline in the draft Security Council resolution has been done at the specific insistence of the Soviet Union? Will he confirm once again that the date in the resolution will not automatically trigger the use of force but is the date after which the option of force could be taken up with the authority of the United Nations Security Council?

We in the Labour party have not seen this crisis simply in terms of the unconditional withdrawal of Iraq from Kuwait and the unconditional freeing of the hostages, indispensable though both things are. We see it above all as a test of the authority of the United Nations. If the 10 United Nations resolutions already carried by the Security Council are not implemented, the authority of the United Nations will be shattered and instead of world order there will be chaos.

If the United Nations resolutions are implemented, preferably peacefully of course, the authority of the United Nations will be enhanced as never before. That authority can then be used to provide for the further actions that must be taken in the middle east. Those are self-determination for the Palestinian people, whose intifada approaches its third anniversary, and a hopeful future for the Palestinian refugees with the aid of the wealth of the Gulf states; a settlement of the disputes between Israel and her neighbours and security for the state of Israel; and an arms embargo and the clearing from the whole region of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons.

All those are prizes which can be won once the United Nations resolutions on Kuwait are implemented. It is clear that they will be implemented. It is now for Saddam Hussein to prevent the nightmare of war by accepting those resolutions. He brought about this crisis by an act of aggression. He can end it by good sense and statesmanship, and the House and the world await his response.

Mr. Hurd: I am grateful, and rather more than conventionally, to the right hon. Gentleman. We are entering a time of national anxiety on this subject, and at such times it is right to have as much national unity as we can.

One strong thought in the minds of all of us who have been working to bring about the restoration of relations first with Iran and now with Syria is that restoration should bring closer the release of our hostages now held in Beirut. I note the right hon. Gentleman's specific suggestion to my right hon. Friend the new Prime Minister. I am glad that the right hon. Gentleman supports the Security Council resolution. Other things being equal, I shall go to New York to take part in the debate tomorrow. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] Of course, that depends on the nature of an announcement which has not been made. That is why I inject a note of uncertainty.

The right hon. Gentleman asked about the deadline in the draft resolution. I am not sure how that originated, but it has strong Soviet support and is one of the points on which the Soviet Union most specifically insisted. I confirm that the right hon. Gentleman is right to say that the date, if it is inserted or when it is inserted in the resolution, will not be the date upon which military action starts. It is the date after which member states will be authorised to take action in pursuit not of the objectives but of the specific requirements of the S Council.

Sir Peter Blaker (Blackpool, South): Is my rig Friend aware that he deserves the congratulation House on the skill with which he has conducted policy on the Gulf throughout the crisis, and the of the whole House on his proposals for the S Council resolution and the resumption of relatio Syria? He will be aware that the one major western that has not contributed forces to the coalition in t is Germany. Does he anticipate that, after the election this coming weekend, there may be moves German Government to alter the German constitu as to enable German forces to be deployed outs NATO area—for example, in the Gulf?

Mr. Hurd: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend remarks. I am happy to tell the House that the German Chancellor informed the Prime Minister ago of a quite substantial contribution by the Germany Government to the costs incurred Government in moving British military forces to th I understand, although it is not a matter for us, t Federal Germany Chancellor proposes, if he obta necessary support in the elections on Sunday, to a German constitution to enable Germany to take collective enterprises such as this.

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): I o support for the Foreign Secretary's statement. Wil be a sombre and anxious moment when the Nations adopt the terms of the proposed resolu which, unhappily, there seems to be no alternative after the expiry of the deadline, will the use of fo justified only if all peaceful means have been sh have failed? Avoiding all questions of linkage, sho not be working through the United Nations to achi necessary long-term solution for the middle east?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. and learned Gentleman is only when peaceful means have been proved ine would we be justified in taking military action. We a at the end of November, and the peaceful press sanctions, public opinion and diplomacy have b place at least since the end of August.

As to long-term solutions, I do not see any r prospect of a useful initiative on the Arab-Israel p until President Saddam Hussein has left Kuwait. Ho I say, as I have said before, that, once that has hap the international community will need to make a effort, recognising that the basis of such a solution n negotiation between Israel, the Arab states a Palestinians.

Mr. Richard Luce (Shoreham): Will my righ Friend reaffirm that the main objective of the mee the Security Council this week is to make it cl Saddam Hussein that the United Nations as a who use whatever means are available to achiev withdrawal of Iraq from Kuwait, and that the Saddam Hussein gets out, the better for him and fo citizens?

Mr. Hurd: That is right. The issue has been bl sometimes by well-meaning people, but it is now bec clearer and starker for President Saddam Hussein.

[Mr. Hurd]

the opportunity to avoid for himself, his people and all of us the undoubted damage and suffering that will be caused by war. That peaceful option is in his hands.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Does the Foreign Secretary have any sympathy with the view of Senator Sam Nunn that the right question is not so much, "Is it justified?" as, "Is it wise?" What does he say to the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath), who told us that the Iraqis have sown minefields in most, if not all, Kuwaiti oilfields and that flames will go up such as mother earth has never seen before with unknown results in terms of carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide and sulphur dioxide emissions?

Some of us think that war in Iraq because of Kuwait is unjustified on a scale of proportion. My hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Leith (Mr. Brown), whom the Foreign Secretary treated in an uncalled—for way, was in the Royal Signals. I was tank crew, firing live ammunition, during my national service. I think that the Foreign Secretary was in the Foreign Office and not in the forces. Ought he not to be a little more careful before dismissing us?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman's last point is unworthy of him. As I said, I found the interventions of the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Leith (Mr. Brown) on this matter silly and confused, and they have done nothing to assist.

Mr. Dalyell: I am entitled to ask Ministers who send young men to their deaths about their own military experience.

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman is entirely wrong, and he should not make remarks without checking them. That one is competely untrue, but I shall not go into the details. He is usually very fair, but he has not been fair on this occasion.

To return to the point of principle and leaving the hon. Gentleman's pettiness today on one side, I simply say that I have heard the hon. Gentleman make the same point to my right hon. Friend the Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher) and others; and, of course, he is right in the sense that war is a horrible business and one cannot contemplate a war of this kind without at the same time contemplating a lot of destruction and suffering. But it would not be an indiscriminate campaign of destruction and therefore I am not entering into the kind of details that he postulates. He is perfectly right in that any war, however just, involves suffering and destruction.

The point that the hon. Gentleman has consistently failed to answer when it is put to him is how, if one is to use that argument as being decisive on all occasions, there is an earthly chance of resisting aggression. That argument, if it is allowed to prevail on every occasion, is carte blanche for any aggressor because it could be wheeled forward to justify lying down in front of Hitler, Mussolini or any aggressor of the past. The hon. Gentleman is not a pacifist, but he has not addressed that question. We have to address that question in a serious way.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Please m
questions so that I may call as ma
possible?

Sir Dennis Walters (Westbury):
Friend accept that the resumption o
with Syria is opportune and wise? Sy
and key position in the middle east
interest to resume diplomatic r
relations do not necessarily signify
We have diplomatic relations with
cannot welcome the appalling acts
Gaza which Israel is perpetrating, bu
relations with both.

Does my right hon. Friend also

Mr. Speaker: Briefly, please.

Sir Dennis Walters: Does my ri
accept that it would be helpful if, w
stand on Kuwait, we also committ
action on the Israel-Palestinian issue
problem has been resolved?

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend is rig
have never regarded having diplom
country as conferring great blessing
be regarded in that light. It is simply
a realistic relationship so that us
transacted with a Government.

Once the aggression is reversed,
possible but necessary to pull the inte
together, in so far as we can, in ba
vigorous effort to bring about a
Arab-Israel dispute.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, W
cynical opportunism to enter ag
relations with Syria when it has con
the Government's prerequisites for
Government have pinpointed the p
the Hindawi affair and the Syrians
and when, if *The Daily Telegraph*
Syrians are behind almost all the terr
today? Will the right hon. Gentlem
and see it as a sad first decisio
Government?

Mr. Hurd: I do not agree. We hav
the problem all the time that I have
Office, and perhaps before. There ha
based on the background of the Hin
right hon. Member for Manch
Kaufman) went to Damascus to dis
Opposition. We have also discussed
intermediaries and, most recently, di
House the outcome in my statement

We are now in the same position
Government. We shall have diplo
Syria because it is useful so to do.
Gentleman will have heard the reaso
made to us on behalf of hostages he
not see the restoration of diplomatic
a patronising pat on the head for th
and all that they do. That is not the
relations. It is a hard-headed c
interests that diplomatic relations sh

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): Why is it that the Germans, French, Japanese and Italians, who have greater need for oil from the Gulf, have fewer troops committed and fewer lives at risk, and are less committed to the military option?

Mr. Hurd: We are not primarily concerned with oil from the Gulf. If we were, the international community would have settled with Saddam Hussein and the oil would be flowing. If we were concerned only with oil, as is sometimes shallowly said—although not by my hon. Friend—we would have settled a long time ago. We are concerned with international order, and a fundamental principle of that is that it is unacceptable for one member state of the United Nations to obliterate another.

Mr. Ken Maginnis (Fermanagh and South Tyrone): My right hon. and hon. Friends in the Unionist party welcome the statement, and we totally support the Government's attitude to the rape of Kuwait. We see some justification for resuming diplomatic relations with Syria in pursuing the Government's actions against international terrorism. However, we cannot help but be suspicious, and we hope that is not being done for purely economic reasons. My party supports such actions only on moral grounds.

Can the United Kingdom justify its attitude to the brutal regime in Cambodia, to the unforgivable genocide——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member must raise that matter another time. He must confine his remarks to the middle east.

Mr. Maginnis: I accept your ruling, Mr. Speaker, but I was comparing the situation in the Gulf with the unforgivable genocide in the Sudan and with the more sophisticated but equally immoral attitude taken by the Irish Republic in its harsh, uncompromising and irredentist claim to the territory of Northern Ireland.

Mr. Hurd: I am not sure that all those cases are exactly comparable, but the hon. Gentleman knows of the efforts that we are making in Cambodia and to establish law and security in Northern Ireland. In every instance, we must pursue a consistent line.

Sir Dudley Smith (Warwick and Leamington): Does my right hon. Friend agree that one of the success stories of the crisis has been the Western European Union's involvement in naval patrols? Does he agree also that the sheer professionalism of the officers and sailors involved has ensured that the sea blockade of Iraq is at least 90 per cent. effective?

Mr. Hurd: I agree with my hon. Friend. The Western European Union has proved its worth as a focus for co-ordinating European efforts. My hon. Friend mentioned the Italians. The Italian navy is involved as well as the French navy and other members. Their efforts in the Gulf are co-ordinated.

The Royal Navy in the Gulf has already challenged 1,900 vessels and boarded 16 as part of the operation. It is playing a notable part in the peaceful pressure on Saddam Hussein.

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): Is the Secretary of State aware that we all deplore the invasion of Kuwait, and that we want to see Iraqi forces out of there as soon as possible? However, bearing in mind that sanctions have not yet been given sufficient time, and the deplorable of democratic effort to find a peaceful and negot solution, would it not be crass irresponsibility on the of the Government, or indeed of any Governmer declare what is in effect a desert death sentence on young British soldiers, as well as possibly millions of casualties, in what could turn out to be one of the devastating conflicts in human history which woul nothing to solve the problems in the middle east i short or long term?

Mr. Hurd: We want to avoid such conflict. The effort of the British Government since 2 August has designed to do that. We have not spared ourselve people in other countries have not spared themselves precisely that. Time ticks on. The aggressor is still

I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman is aware of the enormities now being committed in K by the aggressor. I hope that he will look at the tran of the debate in the Security Council today wit evidence by eye witnesses because if that had happen some of the countries which are dear to the Gentleman we should have had uproar and claim emergency debates in the House. That is happening d day. We want to avoid conflict.

Diplomacy has a role—that is right. However, it not have a role in undermining or cutting away the si straightforward demands of the Security Council. Ge those resolutions is fine. We are talking about diplomatic and economic pressures, such as those ap by President Gorbachev on the Iraqis yesterday—t diplomacy. If the hon. Gentleman is suggesting diplomacy should equal doing away with, weakeni subtracting from the resolutions of the Security Coun placate the aggressor, I think that he is wrong.

Sir Philip Goodhart (Beckenham): If the Ch Government should veto a new United Nations resolu can we, in practice, ignore their veto?

Mr. Hurd: I hope and believe that that is a hypoth question. I hope—I have not total certainty—that tha not arise.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): Who i Foreign Secretary getting into bed with in this deal Syria? What has convinced him that the Syrian re today is any different from the regime which ordere murder of 20,000 Muslims in the city of Hama in which harboured the Lockerbie bombers, and invade colonised parts of Lebanon in what is now greater S The Syrian secret police are no less efficient than I They routinely use murder, terror and torture, Saddam Hussein's secret police. Is it really the case t couple of thousand Syrian troops in the Western make him believe that the hands of President Assa any less bloody than those of Saddam Hussein?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman is mistaken a diplomatic relations—they are not a form of blessing quite rightly have diplomatic relations in Baghdad bec our ambassador is needed to help our people there had diplomatic relations with Stalin all the time th was committing what we know now were clearly son the worst atrocities ever seen, we had them with Hitle so on. Diplomatic relations are not a form of blessi approval but result from a realistic appraisal of whet

[Mr. Hurd]

is in Britain's interests to have direct contact with a particular Government. In the case of Syria, I believe that it is.

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): Does my right hon. Friend agree that one of the miscalculations made by Saddam Hussein was to underestimate the determination, resilience and procedural efficiency of the United Nations? Does he also recognise that, when I was there two weeks ago, it was clear that the role of the British permanent mission, under the leadership of Sir David Hannay, was highly respected? When he flies to New York, will he take with him the support of the House for the work being done within the United Nations in British interests, by that mission under his leadership?

Mr. Hurd: Our mission, first under Sir Crispin Tickell and now under Sir David Hannay, has played a distinguished part since August in helping to bring together in a reasonable way and with a reasonable tone the efforts of the international community.

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): Is the Secretary of State familiar with the Christian teaching on a just war? Does he agree that there are three fundamental requirements? First, the cause must be just, and there is no doubt about that. However, there are other just causes about which the Americans and the Government have not taken action. That is the problem of double standards. Secondly, there has to be no other way. In this case there is another way—sanctions. Thirdly, the remedy must not be worse than the wrong. The potential of the horrendous war in the middle east is great. The Foreign Secretary is wrong and the United Nations will be wrong if it sets a deadline in order to bluster trying to avoid a war and we end up with a war that the right hon. Gentleman did not seek. That is the danger that the Foreign Secretary is putting before us. He is breaking the basic teaching of what constitutes a just war.

Mr. Hurd: I read the cardinal's letter in *The Times* and the archbishop's speech and I accept that it is important for Christians to consider the nature of a just war. However, I do not accept the hon. Lady's interpretation of the criteria. First, the cause is right and just. We have tried and are continuing to try peaceful pressure. The answer to her third question is whether it is safe for any of us that the basic principle of international order should be flouted with impunity. I do not think that it is.

Sir Ian Lloyd (Havant): Has my right hon. Friend or any of the allies in Saudi Arabia received a single shred of evidence to sustain the view that the Hitlerian intransigence so far displayed by Saddam Hussein is likely to diminish or disappear if he is given more time? If there is no such evidence, does not the contribution of that time merely give him further opportunities to sow more mines and polish his weapons, with an appalling effect on the ultimate gravity of the conflict?

Mr. Hurd: If one is contemplating a military option, time works for both sides. Part of the trouble over the past few months has been the blurring of issues to which I have referred. The value of the resolution is that it will clear away some of the illusions to which the aggressor may have been subject. It will present him with the stark choice as it exists—either he complies or he is forced out. It may be a good idea to give him a specific period of weeks—not an extended period—in which to face clearly and without confusion that stark choice.

Mr. George Galloway (Glasgow, Hillhead): The Foreign Secretary was elected this lunch time the *Spectator* parliamentarian of the year. That accolade is well deserved and I congratulate him upon it. Will he accept that he cuts an unlikely figure in favour of war, war rather than jaw, jaw? Yet the words he has delivered this afternoon amount to an ultimatum, so that it is more rather than less likely that our constituents—young men—will shortly be coming home dead in bags. I have no truck with Saddam Hussein, and I hope that the Foreign Secretary accepts that. However, on the day when Saddam Hussein has asked President Bush for talks, will the right hon. Gentleman accept that the Iraqis and millions of Arabs across the area who agree with them have a point of view and that it might be useful to sit down and talk about that before the place goes up in flames and our young men and many hundreds and thousands of others are killed?

Mr. Hurd: I have never sought to minimise the dangers and suffering that come from war. Of course, we are fully aware of the Iraqi point of view. There is no secret about it. The Iraqis believe that they are entitled to remain in Kuwait. We do not accept that and nor do the international community or the hon. Gentleman's leadership because it is wrong. To use the phrase of the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), it is unwise and unsafe to let that countinue.

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook (Orpington): Whatever the diplomatic justification for setting a deadline, is not the inescapable conclusion of setting such a deadline that we do not believe that international economic sanctions will ever succeed?

Mr. Hurd: No. The Security Council resolution, if passed, will add to the existing resolutions, including the sanctions resolution, which is the most important of all peaceful pressures. Shortages are beginning to appear, but, as I told the House a week or so ago, they are not decisive. As I said in reply to previous questions, sanctions are being applied. We are proposing to add what should be the most important of the peaceful pressures—the knowledge, which the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson), who recently visited the desert, conveyed to us, that the military option is in place and will be used. There is a chance, which I strongly hope will be taken, that this accumulation of peaceful pressures will do the job and that Saddam Hussein will withdraw.

Mr. Giles Radice (Durham, North): Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that most Labour Members support the need for a new United Nations resolution to put new pressure on Saddam Hussein? Is he further aware that the way to achieve peace and to avoid war is for Saddam Hussein to get out of Kuwait?

Mr. Hurd: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. That is exactly the point.

Mr. Ian Bruce (Dorset, South): In the past few weeks, we have spoken much of European unity. When my right hon. Friend is in New York, will he take the opportunity to talk to other European Community Foreign Ministers to get some positive measures towards European political

unity and to ensure, as many of my hon. Friends have said, that European Community countries, depending on size, do as much as Great Britain in supporting the United States and the Arab nations in this theatre of conflict?

Mr. Hurd: Burden sharing is very important. As my hon. Friend suggests, if our military contribution, its costs and our economic contribution are added together, we are somewhat ahead of our Community partners. The French are a fraction of a decimal point behind, but they have made military and economic contributions. The Germans have now made a substantial economic contribution, but it is true that, of the European contributions, Britain's represents the highest percentage of gross domestic product.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Is it not the case that since 2 August Saddam Hussein and the criminal regime in Iraq have had every possible opportunity of avoiding war by getting out of Kuwait? If the argument is that war can never be justified—in my view, if military action is taken, it will be justified in all the circumstances —what would be the purpose of the United Nations? Surely it would mean, in effect, that any country could commit outright aggression where it has no quarrel——

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): Why don't you volunteer to go to the desert——

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Canavan: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: No point of order arises.

Mr. Canavan: Hon. Members should go to the desert——

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Canavan: —instead of sending our young men to their deaths in the desert.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member has put his point of view. The hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) has an equal right to do so.

Mr. Winnick: I have a right, I hope, as I have done all my life, to oppose fascists and criminal aggression, and I shall do so because I could not care less whether it is popular or unpopular.

Will the Foreign Secretary confirm that, if this aggression goes unpunished, if Saddam Hussein refuses to withdraw his troops from Kuwait, it would be direct encouragement for other states to do precisely the same?

Mr. Hurd: I have often disagreed with the hon. Gentleman, but I have always recognised that he is a through-and-through United Nations man. He believes in collective security and international order. He is following the logic of his convictions.

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend (Bexleyheath): I warmly commend the Government for their decision to restore diplomatic relations with Syria. Some of us feel that four years has been too long. Bearing in mind the more positive approach of the United States and the strategic importance of Syria, will he confirm that it has a crucial part to play in the forthcoming peace process in the middle east?

Mr. Hurd: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I repeat that I believe that the arguments in favour of restoring relations with Syria are strong. Of course, they do not involve approval of everything that Syria is or does.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): Although the military option must remain credible to ensure that sanctions succeed, will the Foreign Secretary reconsider his suggestion that pursuit of a wider settlement will follow resolution of the Kuwaiti problem, especially as it is essential now to pursue and seek to overcome the intransigence of the Likud, which was demonstrated once again at meetings I chaired in Paris last week?

Mr. Hurd: It is a matter of practicalities. Looking at the practicalities, I do not see the opportunity of a successful international initiative on the Arab-Israel question while the Iraqis remain in Kuwait.

Mr. David Tredinnick (Bosworth): Has my right hon. Friend seen the television reports this week of British troops training in the theatre in Saudi Arabia, demonstrating sophisticated anti-tank equipment and methods of clearing minefields? Does he agree that this kind of media circus could threaten the lives of British troops if we ever have to take action there and that it should be stopped if possible? Will my right hon. Friend make representations to the media, because such reports affect the lives of British soldiers?

Mr. Hurd: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is here. He tells me that he is keeping a close watch on the nature of this presence.

Dr. Dafydd Elis Thomas (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): The Foreign Secretary referred in his original statement to intensifying all the pressures at our disposal—diplomatic, economic and military. He did not tell us in his statement or answers what diplomatic initiatives he now supports. Will the grace period be used for the British Government and other European Governments to support a further diplomatic initiative, particularly a further Arab initiative, or an initiative yet again from the United Nations Secretary-General following the decision that looks likely to be taken this week by the United Nations Security Council?

Mr. Hurd: The United Nations Secretary-General has a role under the Security Council resolution, as the hon. Gentleman clearly knows. The Secretary-General was rebuffed when he tried to exercise that role. The diplomatic moves in these circumstances must be to reinforce in the Iraqis' minds the advantage for them of complying with the resolution by peaceful means.

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): In a sense, the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas) anticipated my question. Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that, of course, everyone in the House and outside it is opposed to war and to young people losing their lives? In relation to the visit to the United Nations tomorrow and the probable signing of the resolution, would it not be appropriate to see the United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. Perez de Cuellar? He began a peace initiative in August which was precipitous and was aborted. It might be appropriate for him now to return again to the middle east and to go to Baghdad to impress on Saddam Hussein

[Mr. Stuart Bell]

the will and intention of the United Nations, so that Saddam Hussein has the opportunity to withdraw while there is still a period of grace and time?

Mr. Hurd: I discussed this aspect in September with the Secretary-General in New York and he felt that there was no point in his offering to go again if he were again rebuffed. The hon. Gentleman is right in saying that the Secretary-General has a role, as a servant of the United Nations, in trying to bring about implementation of Security Council resolutions.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): During the Gulf debates, the Foreign Secretary was opposed to a resolution of the type that is going before the United Nations, on the ground that there was a possibility of its being vetoed. He did not answer the question about a possible veto by China, and I should like him to do so. If the resolution is carried, and as that would be a United Nations commitment, would it not be appropriate that forces in the middle east should be placed under a strict United Nations command structure and should not be operated at the behest of the Americans?

Mr. Hurd: On the first point, it would not have been sensible to go forward with a resolution that one thought would fail, but, as I said, that is not our information at present. On the second point, I do not think that that is likely to be workable in practice or, if there has to be a military option, that it would exercise that option in the most effective and life-saving way. I do not think that that will happen. I imagine that there will be a requirement that any member states that use the authority which the Security Council is about to confer on them should report the results to the Security Council.

Mr. John Cummings (Easington): Does the Foreign Secretary agree that, if British blood is to be spilled in the Gulf, Her Majesty's Government ought to pursue a rigorous policy aimed at the total democratisation of all the Gulf states, which certainly do not have a fine record on human rights?

Mr. Hurd: I referred earlier this afternoon to the conference of Kuwaitis—including Opposition Kuwaitis—held recently in Ta'if. That conference agreed to return to the 1962 constitution in Kuwait. That is the kind of movement that I consider sensible and right for Kuwait.

Mr. Robert Litherland (Manchester, Central): Does not the Foreign Secretary concede that to specify a deadline would automatically put this country on a war footing?

Mr. Hurd: No. It gives a period of grace—a peaceful pause—in which the peaceful pressures for a peaceful solution can reach their height. The expiry of the deadline—I have said this once or twice already, but it is very important—is not in itself a signal for military action to begin.

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): Does the Foreign Secretary accept that one of the most serious obstacles to the establishment of a new international order underpinned by the United Nations is the application of double standards by that body in the face of aggression? If aggression must be met with military force and a devastating war in Kuwait, why is it met with little more than polite protest in the Lebanon, west bank and Gaza?

Mr. Hurd: There is, of course, much more than polite protest. There are Security Council resolutions, because the situation is different: the background to the Israeli occupation of the west bank is entirely different. It is the result of several wars. The Security Council has taken a very clear line—the right line—the author of which was Lord Caradon. The Security Council has said that there must be a negotiation and a reconciliation of Israel's security, and of the rights of the Palestinians to self-determination.

It is not a question of a simple act of aggression which must be reversed, as it is in Kuwait. It is more complicated, and requires—and will be given by the Security Council—a more complicated answer. We must search for that answer. Several of my replies this afternoon have concerned that point.

Mr. Ronnie Campbell (Blyth Valley): Will the Foreign Secretary tell the House what efforts his Department has made, and will make, on behalf of the hostages who are still in Iraq? Is he going to secure their release and start a dialogue with Saddam to that end as countries such as Germany, Sweden, Italy and Spain have done—along with others too numerous to mention?

Mr. Hurd: Our argument—the argument that we have used with the Iraqis throughout—is that the policy of the human shield has no justification, that all our hostages should be released and that those still working in Iraq should be enabled to leave if possible. That is our policy, and we have never ceased to impress it on Iraqis. It is also the policy of the European Community as a whole since 28 October that there should not be negotiations—partial negotiations—for the release of hostages: there should be no bargaining on that subject.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): Given that it took nearly 40 years to resolve the cold war, and given that there is no sign that sanctions are being breached, will the Foreign Secretary urge patience on the other countries before the United Nations resolution is passed and make it absolutely clear that it would be a far greater triumph for the United Nations—and far better for a new world order—if we achieved withdrawal from Kuwait by peaceful means, even it it took one, two, three or even four years, rather than through the loss of a large number of lives?

Mr. Hurd: Patience is certainly a virtue in relation to these matters, and it has been displayed. There has been no rush to arms—no rush to counter-attack Saddam Hussein. There has been a great deal of patience, which has not been rewarded with any progress.

We are not saying that patience has been exhausted on 28 November; we simply want to point out to Saddam Hussein that there is a limit to the period in which he can spoil Kuwait, kill some Kuwaitis and torture others. There is a limit to the time in which peaceful pressures can be expected to be effective. That is what we are saying.

Mr. Alan W. Williams (Carmarthen): How effective are the sanctions that are already in place against the export of oil from Iraq and Kuwait? Is it not true that those sanctions are completely effective and that exports of oil

have ceased? Since Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait to acquire those oil resources and as they have been sterilised, why embark on a path that could lead us to war? Would it not be wiser to give sanctions months or even a year or two to work rather than to prepare for war?

Mr. Hurd: Iraq is not shipping oil. I am not saying that the occasional truck carrying oil does not cross the border, but basically the hon. Gentleman is right. There is no large-scale shipment of oil out of Iraq and therefore Saddam Hussein is deprived of much the greatest part of his foreign exchange. He has quite substantial reserves not least because he stole a lot of money from Kuwait. Shortages are building up in Iraq as a result of sanctions, but, as I have just said, those shortages are not decisive. I do not believe that it is sensible or possible to rely indefinitely on that peaceful pressure to do what is necessary. I doubt whether that kind of peaceful pressure could be sustained indefinitely at its present level of intensity. The hon. Gentleman would have to face the risk of a gradual weakening of the will for collective security. There would then be a danger that at the end of that period the aggressor would sit back in possession of his aggression. It is not safe to contemplate that.

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Stretford): What can the Foreign Secretary tell the House today that will give us any confidence to believe that if there are non-military means to resolve the dispute after the deadline those means will be allowed to continue?

Mr. Hurd: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence and I and, I am sure, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister will continue to do all we can to make the peaceful pressures effective. However, I have felt for a month or so—and perhaps for longer—that the most effective peaceful pressure is the clarity of the military option. The Security Council resolution will illustrate that clarity.

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): I agree with the Foreign Secretary that the case of Kuwait and that of the occupation of the west bank are not analogous. I believe that the attempt to link the two was started by Saddam Hussein as a diversionary tactic. Is there not a danger that that diversionary tactic may soon move from the realm of propaganda to an attempt to embroil Israel in this situation? Should we not take steps to guard against that and would those steps involve supporting the present Government of Jordan?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman is right: that is one of the dangers. I am deeply concerned about the position of Jordan, which, for the time being, has lost its friendship with the Gulf states out of which came a lot of financial help. I believe that it is now largely implementing sanctions and as a result is in desperate economic trouble. We are doing our best within the Community and like the Germans and Japanese who have substantial resources and are not committed militarily in the Gulf, to bring help to Jordan.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): Will the Foreign Secretary announce today that he is redoubling his efforts to counter what is ultimately an even greater threat than Saddam Hussein, namely, the brisk international trade in armaments research and information? Is he aware that there are many firms in this country and agencies in the rest of Europe, in south America, the United States, China and throughout the world that are selling weapons and information on exotic conventional weapons such as fuel air explosives, laser battlefield weapons and nuclear, chemical and, the most terrifying of all, biological weapons? That trade will eventually threaten future Saddam Husseins and crises throughout the world unless the new world order can control it.

Mr. Hurd: Arms embargoes are in place with regard to Iran and Iraq. The hon. Gentleman knows how they have been enforced. With regard to his wider international point, there are various international conventions in place. When this situation is over, and even if Saddam Hussein were to withdraw peacefully from Kuwait, I agree that the existence and potential of those weapons would remain a major problem.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: I called three of the hon. Members who are now rising at Question Time—*[Interruption.]*—but I shall call them again if they remain patient.

Mr. Bernie Grant (Tottenham): Will the Foreign Secretary confirm that our troops are under the operational command of the Americans, which means that they could be dragged into a war without any reference to the right hon. Gentleman or to any other Minister?

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. Tom King): They are not under such operational command.

Mr. Hurd: As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence said, he has worked out detailed arrangements with the United States, but the position is not as the hon. Member for Tottenham (Mr. Grant) has described it. In any case, there is no question of our forces being committed to military operations without the consent of Her Majesty's Government.

Ms. Dawn Primarolo (Bristol, South): I feel horrified about the way in which we are being dragged towards the inevitability of war and that the world community, with all its resources, cannot find ways to make Saddam Hussein get out of Kuwait without war. I am disappointed that the five permanent members of the Security Council now believe that war is necessary. Will the Foreign Secretary explain how the date in the resolution is not the date, upon which war will commence if Saddam Hussein has not withdrawn, because if Saddam Hussein ignores that date, inevitably we will be at war?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Lady has mistaken the point. The date in the resolution—whether it is 1 January or 15 January—will not be the date on which military action will begin. It is the date from which member states will be authorised—not instructed, but authorised—to take such action which, I repeat, is in pursuit not of their own objectives but of the specific objectives that the Security Council has laid down.

Mr. Ron Brown (Edinburgh, Leith): I remind the Foreign Secretary and the House that the tabloid press in this country have a motto—"Make it simple; make it juicy; make it up." May I assure the Government that I was never hounded or imprisoned and that I have never been a prisoner of the Iraqis, although certain newspapers, such as the *Daily Record*, have suggested that that might be the case? Nevertheless, there are prisoners out there

[Mr. Ron Brown]

from our own British community and they expect a lot more from a new revitalised British Government who, I hope, will have new ideas. One of those ideas must be to negotiate on and to discuss this problem. We may speak about linkage, and we may speak about Israel, but the one thing that we must speak about is the lives of those 1,400 British people out there, because they are important. The whole world knows that not only those lives but many other lives are at stake. Indeed, the whole world is at stake. What is the Foreign Secretary going to do about that? Will he approach the Iraqis in some way, even unofficially, because they will approach him?

Mr. Hurd: If we had followed most of the advice that we had received from the Britons trapped in Kuwait, we would have started military action a long time ago.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): Does the Foreign Secretary accept that, although we fully endorse his position that diplomatic recognition does not in any way give support, the parents and relatives of those who died at Lockerbie will want to be assured that Her Majesty's Government have genuine assurances from the Syrians that they will no longer support or in any way encourage terrorist action that emanates from their shores?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Lady has raised a perfectly fair point. Obviously I cannot say anything about the progress of the inquiry into Lockerbie, although I have taken that point into account. The hon. Lady will know the position that the Americans have taken on it also.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I shall take the presentation of Bill first.

BILL PRESENTED

Road Traffic

Mr. Secretary Parkinson, supported by Mr. Secretary Waddington, Mr. Secretary Rifkind, Mr. Secretary Patten, Mr. Secretary Hunt, Mr. Secretary Waldegrave, Mr. Norman Lamont and Mr. Christopher Chope, presented a Bill to amend the law about road traffic; And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed. [Bill 17.]

WELSH AFFAIRS

Ordered,

That the Matter of Education and Training in Wales, being a Matter relating exclusively to Wales, be referred to the Welsh Grant Committee for its consideration.—*[Mr. Chapman.]*

Points of Order

4.34 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I congratulate you on allowing questions on the statement to run for so long? I was fortunate enough to be called early. Along with other hon. Members, I congratulate you on allowing questions to run for so long on this important subject so that the Foreign Secretary could patiently answer our questions.

But there is a problem, and it is on that problem that I seek advice. The Gulf crisis is possibly the most important since 1945. You will have detected from the nature of the questioning that passionate beliefs are held by hon. Members other than those on the two Front Benches. Will you reflect on your powers of discretion? I am speaking off the top of my head, but I understand that a long time ago Mr. Speaker Gully, in the days when Sir Steven Runciman's father was a Cabinet Minister, was able to take certain decisions on controversial issues of the day to allow proper arguments to be deployed by Back-Bench Members.

My question to you, Mr. Speaker, is this. Do you believe that you have special powers of discretion to enable the many hon. Members—I hesitate to give a figure, but perhaps 30, 40, 50 or more—who hold views which may be substantially different from those voiced from the Front Bench to put their case? What are the powers of Mr. Speaker on that?

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. My hon. Friend referred to passionately held views and you had an illustration of them during the exchanges. You will be aware that I, like many of my hon. Friends, disagree with my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell). Time and time again in the history of Parliament, one of the outlets for passionately held views was a debate. Although I recognise that it is not up to you to decide—unless at some stage you grant an application under Standing Order No. 20—it would be unfortunate if parliamentary business was arranged without providing an opportunity for the House to have not merely exchanges such as we have just witnessed but a debate. Presumably the business of the House is being arranged right up to Christmas. Then we shall have the recess. I hold a view different from that of many hon. Members and I would defend and justify it if I were so fortunate as to catch your eye in any debate. I believe that a debate would be useful.

Mr. Speaker: I fully understand that a statement is no substitute for a debate. I have that very much in mind in thanking the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) for what he said. This is an important matter which is of interest to the whole of Britain and to the wider world. That is why I let questions run today.

However, I must always have regard to the subsequent business before the House. I was able to do that today. With regard to a debate, we have business questions tomorrow when we may hear that there is to be a debate on this matter. I fully understand the anxieties that hon. Members on both sides of the argument expressed.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will be aware that there is a time-honoured tradition in the House that the only

way in which seats can be reserved is by placing prayer cards. You will also be aware that, according to another tradition, the first seat below the Gangway is always reserved for former Prime Ministers. As we now have two former Prime Ministers, would you perhaps suggest to the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher) that she might take up the seat on the second row back so that she can keep an eye on both the Prime Minister and the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath)?

Mr. Speaker: That was a good try. I can say with my hand on my heart that that is not a matter for me.

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I would not wish the House or those who read our proceedings to be misled. There is absolutely no tradition on this side of the House of placing prayer cards. That goes back to the end of the last century when the first Labour Members of Parliament came from the north. They found that prayer cards had been placed by their honourable colleagues from the south and removed them. From that time to this, Labour Members have removed prayer cards.

Mr. Speaker: The House knows that there is a convention on the matter. We should now get on.

Orders of the Day

Statutory Sick Pay Bill

Considered in Committee.

Clause 1

REDUCTION IN THE AMOUNTS RECOVERABLE BY EMPLOYERS WHO HAVE PAID STATUTORY SICK PAY

4.39 pm

Mr. Archie Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): I beg to move amendment No. 1, in page 1, line 11, leave out from 'payments' to 'and' in line 15, and insert

'after the words "prescribed circumstances", there shall be inserted the words "and in the circumstances in paragraph (aa) below.".'

The Second Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Miss Betty Boothroyd): With this it will be convenient to discuss the following amendments: No. 2, in page 1, line 15, after 'payments,' insert—

(aa) there shall be added, after paragraph (a), the following provision:

"(aa) entitling, except in prescribed circumstances, any employer employing twenty or more persons, who has made one or more payments of statutory sickpay in a prescribed period to recover an amount equal to 80 per cent. of the aggregate of these payments.";'.

No. 3, in page 1, line 21, leave out from 'made' to the end of line 23 and insert

'there shall be added at the end, the words, "or, where applicable, the amounts which they are entitled to recover by virtue of paragraph (aa) above.".'.

No. 4, in page 1, line 26, leave out '1(a)' and insert '1(aa)'.

Mr. Kirkwood: I know that some of the arguments about the Bill were rehearsed on Second Reading, but I cannot understand why it is necessary to complete the Bill with such speed. Second Reading took place on Monday, when, unfortunately, I was unable to attend, but my hon. Friend the Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) spoke. Why is it necessary for the Bill to be considered in Committee today?

The speed with which we are proceeding with the Bill has caused some suspicion, to put it mildly, among those who will be directly affected by it. They believe that the Government's undue haste is suspicious. The Minister furrows his brow at that, but the story behind the argument goes back before my time to 1982 when the old sickness benefit was changed into the statutory sick pay scheme. I am told that those changes led to hard-fought arguments that continued for many months. Although small businesses, the Confederation of British Industry and other interested parties were not entirely happy with the final result, they felt that their arguments had been heeded and that they had had a fair crack of the whip.

I do not believe that the current consultation has been satisfactory in terms of the changes that were first brought to the attention of the House in the uprating statement made a few weeks ago. I do not use unmeasured language often, but it is deplorable and a matter for the House if the Government proceed with the Bill—admittedly it is small and technical, but the changes are far-reaching—at such speed. There are only 15 Bills in the Queen's Speech, and

[Mr. Kirkwood]

I cannot understand why we should proceed with such haste. Since we are discussing the first group of amendments I hope that it will be in order for the Minister to say something about that. It would be helpful if he could reassure those interested parties that there was no untoward reason for such indecent haste.

I know that hon. Members have urgent business to attend to in other parts of the House and I accept that the Bill is small and technical, but it is disappointing that more of our colleagues are not present to consider the issues. The statutory sick pay scheme, however, in common with other parts of the social security system, is now so complex that it takes experts to work out the implications of any changes for small businesses, employers and employees. Surely that is another reason for moving slowly on the Bill. It is important to remember that the Bill will have far-reaching effects for businesses and employees.

The Second Reading debate made it clear that the function of the Bill is to reduce the statutory sick pay rebates from the current level of 100 per cent. to 80 per cent., which is a big jump in one go. It will also remove the additional rebate for national insurance contributions that are paid on statutory sick pay, and it gives the Government the power to cut the rebate again without primary legislation. The Bill also increases the threshold for the higher level of statutory sick pay from £125 to £185, but that higher level will not be uprated, but frozen at £52·50.

The net effect of the changes will be to put a disproportionate burden on those businesses with a much higher incidence of sickness. That is bad news for small businesses, which will see them as the thin end of the wedge.

4.45 pm

In the uprating statement, the Secretary of State spoke about a new partnership between the Government and employers, but in reality it is a new partnership between the treasury and the Department of Social Security. The Treasury required cuts to be made and the Department has found a mechanism for offloading those cuts and their impact on to employers' shoulders.

An important principle that is buried in the Bill should not go unnoticed. If employers are to be directly responsible for the provision of sick benefits in the future, it should not happen piecemeal. If the Government are intent upon that, they should say so openly, so that we can discuss it properly. The withdrawal of redundancy rebates is an obvious example of what can happen by default. I hope that that change is not part of a trend.

The amendments are designed to exclude from the Bill firms that employ fewer than 20 people; after all, the proposed changes will have a far greater impact on small businesses than on larger ones. There are precedents in employment law for distinguishing among companies based on their size. That principle should be accepted as there are compelling reasons for questioning whether the full-blown provisions of the Bill should be visited on small businesses that employ fewer than 20 people.

The general economic climate faced by small businesses is much harsher than that faced by larger businesses. That factor should also be taken into account.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I ar
interrupt the hon. Gentleman, but I hope that he
with me, as I am new to this. The hon. Gentlema
to businesses with fewer than 20 employ
amendment No. 2 speaks of
"any employer employing twenty or more persons
I assume that either a mistake has been made
missing something—probably the latter—so pe
hon. Gentleman can enlighten me.

Mr. Kirkwood: I asked the same question this
My hon. Friend the Member for Orkney and
(Mr. Wallace) is a distinguished advocate at th
Bar and has chosen to draft the amendments s
Bill's provisions affect those who employ mor
people. Therefore, by implication, they exclud
firms with fewer than 20 employees. However, th
of the hon. Member for Newham, North-W
Banks) was perfectly fair.

Do not ask me what motivates advocates. If
more time, I think that I could have dr
amendments more simply—that sounds like a
vicious attack on my hon. Friend the Member fo
and Shetland, and I withdraw it. The Minister
generous soul and I know him so well, that I a
that he would not let the legislation founder on
technicalities. Having said that, it was a perfect
question to ask. As I said, I asked the same que
morning; I am glad that I did because otherwi
have been completely floored by the hon. Ge
intervention.

There is a case for considering the special circ
in the economic climate. The uniform busi
provisions, changes in business rates and inte
and the administrative impact of VAT have
disproportionately hard effect on smaller busines
of the research undertaken by the Governme
provision, extent and incidence of occupationa
schemes is flawed. Will the Minister say someth
that? I know that a study was produced which is
Library, but it is vigorously contested by the org
representing small businesses. They believe
research was selective and produced results th
reflect reality. I make no comment on that, but
the question to the Minister. Had there be
consultation in advance of the Bill's introdu
might have been able to deal with such issues.

People who run and work in small businesses
me repeatedly that they were given a clear u
that additional costs would not be visited on
more than they were under the scheme introduc
That is as valid now as it was then. I know that
was made at some length on Second Reading, b
it because it is of particular relevance to small
which employ fewer than 20 people.

About 96 per cent. of United Kingdom
employ fewer than 20 people. Such business
cannot afford statutory or other occupationa
schemes. It is not economically feasible for then
The figures that I have been given show that th
be anything up to £11 a week, and can run fo
under the Bill's provisions. If such costs were v
one or two-person business, it could face diffic

If one or two of the people involved in
two-person business are sick for 28 weeks, th
reclaim national insurance contributions becau

not paying any contributions to recover. What are the people in business at that sort of level expected to do in the context of the new provisions? It is all very well if one is running a major company with professionals to advise on such matters, or if one's national insurance contribution of £1,000 or £2,000 is billed each week so that one can deduct and divvy up and, in the fulness of time, everything works out in the wash. The arguments are fairly suspect even at that level, but when applied to businesses that are self-owned or have a sole proprietor, the Bill's provisions have some frightening consequences.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security, the hon. Member for Norfolk, South-West (Mrs. Shephard), provided a useful answer to a parliamentary question tabled by the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) on 24 January. The question involved the number of changes in the statutory sick pay scheme and its administration since its introduction—there have been 19. I shall not detain the Committee by reading out the list, but they are all of some significance. That is all very well for someone who works in the accounts department of ICI because he or she can cope with it very well—I do not complain about that. But it must have been difficult to keep up with that pace of change since March 1985. I concede that the changes included uprating of statutory sick pay rates, so we can subtract five from the total of 19, but that still leaves a significant number of changes for a small business confronting the Bill's provisions. I see that the ministerial brows is again furrowed.

The changes will have major effects on employers, particularly those in small businesses. They will encourage the small number of businesses which perhaps do not play to the rules as they should and are guilty of malpractice, to opt out. That will have a direct adverse impact on the employees of the small firms. I read the debate on Second Reading carefully and it contained well-rehearsed arguments about the Bill's impact—which will be big enough—on part-timers, women and disabled employees. However, it will have a particularly great impact on people in smaller firms. The employees in such firms are totally reliant on statutory sick pay and the Bill will have serious consequences for them.

This is an important debate and I could go on at great length, but I do not want to repeat points made on Second Reading. This is one of the most crucial amendments and unless I receive some fairly convincing answers, I reserve the right to invite the House to divide on it. I shall be grateful if I have some support. It is often a lonely furrow to plough in the modern Liberal Democrat party and I am grateful for support from wherever it comes. If I may be facetious, the three Conservative Members present should look carefully at the Bill's impact because the Conservative party often beats its chest about what it has achieved for small businesses. To use fighting talk, if they are not careful, the Government will get beaten in the jaw at the next election, and will not be easily forgiven. They must be cautious if they want to introduce such a measure with impunity. I say that with some passion, because the argument has been put to me with great force.

I shall encapsulate my argument by giving a quote from Mr. Ian Handford, the employment affairs chairman of the National Federation of Self Employed and Small Businesses. I know that the briefing was probably sent to other Members. It states:

"The Government is shifting the welfare state onto the backs of the business community. Small businesses just cannot take on board state benefits out of their present meagre profits."

The sting is in the document's tail, which states:

"If only 10 per cent. of all businesses take evasive action to defend themselves from this attack then there will be a loss of some 350,000 jobs."

Rather than take on the additional hassle of the financial and administrative burden of the Bill, companies may simply divest themselves of employees. If that happens it will be a tragedy, not just for the employees and the firms, but for the British economy. Those are the stakes involved in the group of amendments. I hope that the Minister will seriously consider the arguments put to him before he decides to rule out the amendment.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) spoke about dividing the Committee. He does not need to go that far, but he is right to put down a marker, because the Bill makes a change to the arrangements that were originally agreed. People would be worried if there were further changes. I spoke on Second Reading, but I had to leave the Chamber before the end of the Minister's opening speech and did not hear his comments about the Bill's effect on smaller businesses. I was concerned when I read in *Hansard* that he said:

"it was not possible to engage in advance in substantial consultation."—[*Official Report*, 26 November 1990; Vol. 181, c. 644.]

If there is any intention to move further down this road, I hope that there will be time fully to consult small businesses on all the issues raised by the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire.

5 pm

When I spoke on Monday, I declared an interest as a small employer. I consulted my company about the effect of the Bill and received a fax just before the debate, saying that the effect would be insignificant. My arithmetic suggests that it will mean £5 per annum for each employee. That means that, for a firm employing 10 people, the cost would be £50. Of course, all firms will pass on the cost in order to survive and that may have a small inflationary effect. I hope that no more such costs will be imposed, because they could lead to price rises. The swings and roundabouts effect does not always work for small employers, and it will be necessary to see to what extent employers will need to have insurance to cover the costs.

Yesterday I attended a meeting with members of the Electrical Contractors Association. They are worried about the Bill's effect on smaller employers and especially about the way in which it could encourage such employers to use self-employed people who work on 714 certificates. They were not happy about the effect of the changes on the structure of the industry; it would encourage some companies to put their work in the hands of self-employed people. That can have an effect on the relationship between the trade association and the industry as a whole.

Britain is almost unique in having no statutory regulation of the electrical industry in the way that such regulation works abroad. Generally speaking, electrical contracting abroad is subject to statutory regulation. However, in Britain the trade association polices standards. If that association's standing were to be eroded by legislation that would change its structure, such legislation would be viewed unfavourably. If the

Government intend to move further down this road, I hope that they will allow proper time to consult representatives of industry and that the electrical contracting industry will be included because of its responsibility to ensure standards.

Britain is different from other countries in the Common Market in that it does not have the statutory regulation that I have mentioned, and that creates difficulties for British companies trying to compete in the Community on equal terms. At the moment, foreign companies can compete in Britain because we do not have statutory regulations to prevent them from setting up here. However, overseas countries have restrictions that make it impossible for British companies to compete there. There is no comparability enabling a British company automatically to be accepted in France, Germany or Italy.

Electrical contractors would like to see the industry regulated, but the Government do not like to regulate and prefer arrangements to be voluntary. Such arrangements are threatened by the changes in the Bill. I support the Bill as a whole, but I should like to be assured that there will be full consultation before there are any more changes. Those consultations should be with representatives of smaller firms and with industries that are affected by the Bill.

The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire was right to table his amendment, but I hope that he will not press it to a Division, because in its present form the Bill has a de minimis effect on employers.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): The speech by the hon. Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) showed modest courage. Unfortunately, it did not last until the end of his speech. We can understand that, because these are dangerous times for the Conservative party and they are fraught with many anxieties. The Secretary of State is not in his place, but we hope that he will rejoin us before the end of the debate. Who can tell?

The National Federation of Self Employed and Small Businesses in Wales contacted me and no doubt it contacted hon. Members in other parts of the country. It fully studied our deliberations on Monday and has returned with greater vehemence against the Bill. The federation has not accepted any of the Government's assurances. It says:

"The Government is shifting the wefare state onto the backs of the business community."

That is right, and the process is being carried out in small ways.

A regulation about welfare milk was debated in the House and it was discovered that precisely the same process was going on. All six or seven Conservative Members who spoke in the debate derided the change. One went so far as to describe it as crazy. The Government proposed to push on to the milkman, who is a small business man, £80 million which had previously been provided by the state. The Bill is another move in that direction.

A series of small moves, regulations and changes, passing through Parliament with hardly any attention from outside, are an attempt to privatise the welfare state. Costs have been moved on to the backs of various other agencies. It is good to see that small business men—there is little else in the country except small businesses now—are fighting back. Small business men have had a rough deal from the Government. We are in an economic recession and have high interest rates, and rightly warning us that one of the consequen nasty little Bill could be another c unemployment.

Even at this late stage, the Governme reconsider the Bill. In a modest, persuasive wa Member for Bolton, North-East said gen Government—we shall speak with a stronger there should have been consultation. He said i now, but perhaps there will be consultation in whole process has been a disgrace. It is quite organisations representing small businesses against a Government whom they see as repres and say that this is not government by reason o but the policy of an elected tyranny.

On Second Reading, the Government's case collapsed, but still they forge ahead regard arguments. That is not the way that G throughout the century until the last dark Thatcherism have behaved. There have bee changes in the past 24 hours. There is a new f Government continue to pursue the same old and tyrannical policies. I hope that in the speech we shall be given some hope that the c be postponed or subjected to major modificat

Mr. Ian Bruce (Dorset, South): As a fo business man, I should like to speak about the faced by small businesses over statutory sick p was running an employment agency in Yo transfer of the administration of statutory sic the DHSS, as it was then, to the emplo horrendous business, because there was d understanding the regulations. In a business several hundred people, it is almost certain that somebody is drawing statutory sick pay.

Every time the part-time employee who ca wages in my firm had to deal with statutory came to see me, the managing director, so that through the regulations again to see wheth applying them correctly. I ask my right hon. Minister to grab a little booklet on this subjec work out how much statutory sick pay has t somebody has had a few days of sick, or has b then come back and then gone off sick again.

I know that we are examining the Bill to se needs amending, but I ask my right hon. Friend fundamental in his approach. The Tory party i revision of many aspects of life. It is strange t a statutory sick pay scheme that provides o amount of the money that somebody in emplo has been sick would normally receive. The pe working out, at the end of the week, what should receive, would normally, if there were sick pay scheme, pay the usual £100 a week, d normal tax and national insurance contributio the Government provide a contribution in statutory sick pay, the firm makes a calculation, ensuring that all the paperwork is makes the wages up to the normal level from The Ministry can examine all the paperwork

The amount of money that the Governm employer is probably less than the c administration of the scheme. I suspect that kn 80 per cent. of SSP off national insurance, ra of it—yet another calculation problem and ca

—will result only in more difficulties. If we go down this route—European legislation may be pushing us this way —employers may be forced to bring in a form of sick pay insurance for all their employees. Perhaps we should go a step further and make all employees have some form of insurance that pays all their wages if they are sick or off work on maternity leave or for some other reason.

I know that Labour Members may be upset about the thought of fully comprehensive insurance schemes, but the Government insurance scheme is an insurance scheme only for a small part of what people expect when they are in employment. Therefore, we have the worst of all worlds instead of the best of all worlds. People should know what they are paying for, rather than, as they do with the employers' national insurance, piling in the money and——

The Second Deputy Chairman: Order. I hate to interrupt the hon. Member, but he is going very wide of the amendments.

Mr. Bruce: I am sorry that you interrupted me, Miss Boothroyd, because I was about to finish, and then I would have stopped being out of order.

I started by addressing my remarks to the specifics of the small business, but began to go far wider. To attack this problem in its minutiae may be the wrong approach. Perhaps we should be looking at the way that the business works. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Minister will take note of what I am saying. Many of the small business men whom I know are upset; perhaps because they have got hold of some incorrect publicity about what the scheme will cost them. We should look at SSP provisions again. If the Government want to move this away from being an additional Government expenditure and towards loading it on small businesses, we should perhaps go the whole hog and go for a private insurance scheme rather than a statutory sick pay system.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): The thrust of Government policy, in general and in the particular with this Bill, is towards private insurance schemes for everybody. That is what it is all about and it would be better if the Government came out and said so. Both the Labour party and small businesses have long been asking for consultations, but the Government have adopted a drip, drip, drip approach, introducing Bills such as this. In my constituency, small businesses are unhappy about the Bill because they are running on a shoestring.

The Government repeatedly tell us that the rise of small businesses is important. If that is so, why are they loading these extra burdens onto small businesses? The Government say that small businesses will increase in number and employ more people, but Bills such as this make small businesses look again at the bottom line of their costs and decide either not to take on more people or that they have too many people already, and so spend too much on employees. Furthermore, they are uncertain about the future.

5.15 pm

There should have been consultations about the Bill, but there was not, because last time the Government introduced such a Bill, there was a great furore, which forced the Government to retract what they intended. That is why we have had a two-day debate on the Bill—to mak sure that the furore, which has started, will be too lat when its get going.

The Government should look seriously at the effect tha the Bill will have on businesses. It is bad enough to load o them administration of a sick pay scheme, which rightl belongs to the state benefit system, because there are s many different employers, different sizes of employers an different possibilities. Now, the Government are going little bit further and making firms bear not only the cost o administration but part of the cost of paying sick pay Firms should be reimbursed 100 per cent., because, unles we adopt the Japanese idea of manufacturing, with all th benefits that go with that, piecemeal changes such as thi should not be introduced. If there is to be an employer sick pay scheme, there should be full consultation and i should be introduced properly.

Mr. Tony Banks: I thank the hon. Member fo Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) fo explaining the thinking behind the amendments. I wa slightly confused when I looked at them, but I nov understand everything, as he has explained that they wer drafted by a Scottish advocate. I suppose that the theor that, by mentioning large firms, only one automatically excludes small firms has a certain logic. Perhaps the hon Member, as an advocate, submits his bills by sending th client the change and allowing him to deduce from tha how much the bill would be. That is a strange way to d it.

I agree with the hon. Gentleman's comments about th haste with which the Bill is being pushed through. It i rather perverse that we shall have less time for th Committee stage, when we are supposed to look at th clauses in great detail, than we did for Second Reading, th debate on which included repetition of a number of points We do not understand why there should be such haste, an I hope that the Minister, in his usual courteous way, wil explain that to the House.

The Minister must excuse us for feeling rathe suspicious, because we have seen the way in which th Government, under the previous Prime Minister, wer wont to deal with opposition by riding roughshod over it We are about to have a rerun of this, although we have a new Prime Minister. It is clear from the speeches of th hon. Members for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham and for Dorset, South (Mr. Bruce) that they are unhappy about the Bill.

When the hon. Member for Roxburgh an Berwickshire puts the amendment to the vote, th Opposition will support him, but Tory Members will com flooding in from outside, not knowing what the argument are, and will be whipped through the No Lobby. Th Minister should pay heed to debates in the Committe dealing with a Bill. As all the speeches so far have, to some extent, shown concern, ranging through to outrigh opposition, the Minister should reconsider his positio and introduce amendments at a later stage. However, a the Bill's remaining stages will be taken tonight, it will b difficult for him to do that. He seems to have boxed himsel into a corner, but I suspect that that is a position into which he wanted to be put.

The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire said that it takes experts to work things out in this area, and I do not pretend to be an expert. However, I had some sympathy with the hon. Member for Dorset, South when

[Mr. Tony Banks]

he was explaining the problems that small businesses experience as more and more administrative burdens are laid upon them while they try to get on with making some money.

For the Opposition to come in so heavily in support of small businesses may seem rather strange to Conservative Members, but we do support initiative and enterprise, particularly among those who, by the efforts of their hands and brains, are trying to make a decent living. When I try to complete my tax return at the end of the year and have to look at all my office accounts, I realise what it is to be a small business man. If I had wanted to be a shopkeeper, I could have aspired to being one. I find it tedious dealing with all the invoices and I can well imagine why, with all these changes, small business people feel so frustrated.

The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire said that we must rely on experts and when it comes to the Bill's impact we must rely on the National Federation of Self Employed and Small Businesses. On Second Reading, it was said that, when making their submissions to the Government, many organisations tend to overstress the difficulties as a negotiating position from which to try to pull the Government back a bit. But the federation is not exaggerating; it is being straightforward. I am reinforced in that belief by the contributions by the hon. Members for Bolton, North-East and for Dorset, South. They made a number of good points.

If I recall correctly, when the views of the federation were dealt with on Second reading, the Secretary of State said that perhaps it did not know the full extent of the proposals and that when it knew the full extent of the national insurance contributions it might feel happier. The federation has sent further details to most hon. Members who took part in that debate, so it has had a chance to study the points made by Ministers on Second Reading and it is still not happy. Indeed, it is even more unhappy than it was on Second Reading.

It may be that Mr. Handford, speaking on behalf of the federation, is being over-alarmist, but I do not think that he would be happy with such an accusation. In his press release, he says:

> "The Government is shifting the welfare state onto the backs of the business community. Small businesses just cannot take on board state benefits out of their present meagre profits. If only 10 per cent. of all businesses take evasive action to defend themselves from this attack then there will be a loss of some 350,000 jobs."

I should like to know exactly what that means because it is a rather threatening note to put in a press statement. Does it mean that 10 per cent. of small businesses will lay off workers who are sick? If so, that is alarming. It is surely not something that the Government want to happen. I hope that there will be some reconsideration of the matter.

Labour Members and small businesses suspect that this is part of an onion-peeling exercise which the Government so often adopt when making changes, particularly in social welfare, and that this is one small step which will be followed by other small steps. The Bill clearly gives the Government the opportunity to make even further reductions. There is a great deal of suspicion that the payment of workplace benefits will, in the end, be moved on to the backs of all businesses. If that is the objective, the Government should come clean and tell us, but I suspect that they will not. I am sure that the Mi
often believes passionately, that honesty
but at times he is not prepared to give in

In those circumstances, we are r
amendments and to pay attention
expressed by the federation. I hope tha
received them because the federation n
points with which he should deal when
not appear to have done so, so let me
various points.

The document says that the federati
"estimates that if only 10 per cent. of the s
were to take defensive action against the n
will be a loss of some 350,000 jobs."
Secondly, it says:

"An extra 350,000 unemployed woul
more in benefits than the Government's
£100 million not to mention the social co
Thirdly, it says:

"The NFSE is not concerned about the
suffers the average three-week sick pay.
about the small business with one or two e
suffer the full 28 week sick leave."
Lastly, it says:

"Such a business would suffer costs
scheme of over £300. The reduction in
insurance will only save the small busin
small businesses of over £200."

The federation represents the sort o
the Government are often pointing to s
economic miracle is happening. The
believe them, and nor, it would app
business people.

I hope that when the Minister replie
reply specifically to the points made
suffer the most—the small businesses.

**The Minister for Social Security an
(Mr. Nicholas Scott):** The hon. Member
Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) complai
that my brow was furrowed. He should
with responsibility for social security.
Friend the Foreign Secretary said, o
equal, I expect that my brow will conti
for some time to come as I deal with w
complex area of Government policy.
never be simple and straightforward,
respond to a range of different needs
society who, one way or another, fall

The hon. Gentleman asked why we
quickly. I do not want to bore the H
what my right hon. Friend the Secretary
on Second Reading only about 48 hours
reason for proceeding quickly was to
maximum possible notice so that
arrangements, adjust their software or
to do, to ensure that all the arra
implemented by April 1991.

We had no ulterior motive and we ha
way to alert employers, their organisa
what we were proposing. I cannot ren
letters I have signed in reply to ho
forwarded to me the concerns of the
organisations and other bodies so that
to consider those replies and, if necess
me.

It is only tangential, but I was aske
were only 15 Bills in the Queen's Spe
proceed at a slightly more relaxed pace.

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the best course,
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Disabled People
Roxburgh and
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on hard times.
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Members who
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will have time
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hy, since there
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ust remind him

that there were only 15 Bills in the previous Queen's Speech, but about 40 reached the statute book that Session. The Queen's Speech does not necessarily cover every contingency that arises during the parliamentary Session.

5.30 pm

The hon. Gentleman suggested that the Bill will result in savings, and of course that is true. Government and Social Security Ministers will have to reassess their priorities constantly, and the savings that flow from the Bill will play some part in meeting the cost of the special provision for poorer pensioners and of uprating residential care and nursing home limits in the coming year. There is nothing wrong with asking businesses to accept a modest increase in the contribution they make to meet the sickness costs of their employees.

Mr. Kirkwood: Does the Minister have any information about the cost of limiting the measure according to the size of the firm? That calculation may be almost impossible to make, but it would help the Committee if the right hon. Gentleman could say what the cost of the amendment would be.

Mr. Scott: I will deal shortly with the specific impact of the Bill, but I shall first answer some of the more general points that have been made.

The hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) used the phrase "onion peeling" and other hon. Members asked whether, by introducing this measure in the current Session, we are embarking on a process of steadily reducing the percentage of sickness pay that will be met by the Government. On Second Reading, both my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I said that we have no plans to go down that route.

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood) *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Scott: The hon. Lady may not take my word for that, but I assure her that I am speaking the truth. I say the same to my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham).

Mr. Thurnham: The point has been made to me that firms which cover their sickness costs by an insurance scheme will now face higher premiums, so the Bill will contribute to inflation—although I accept that the amount involved will be quite tiny.

Mr. Scott: That money will be spent one way or another, either by the Government or by businesses.

The assumption is often made that sickness payments are always for a period of 28 weeks, but as was made clear on Second Reading, the average spell of sickness is only three weeks. Ninety per cent. of absences end within eight weeks, and many end earlier, after only one or two weeks.

I dispute any suggestion that the IFF survey was slanted towards larger firms. It covered a range of businesses, from small to much larger firms, and the patterns of sickness that occurred in them all were taken into account.

The Department gives maximum assistance to employers in helping them to cope with the undoubted burden of administering statutory sick pay, in the form of videos, seminars, wall charts and other aids, so that they can make their calculations as simply and accurately as possible. The help given by the Government to small firms in a variety of ways far outside the scope Department has encouraged the growth in businesses over the past few years.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, Nor asked about the electrical contracting indust recollection of that industry, from long before I the House, is that it was in the forefront of provid and holiday coverage to small contractors. I imag that continues. I have a great deal of admiration industry's innovations in that respect, and if m Friend will convey to me the detail of the concern expressed, I will give him a considered reply.

The amendments seek a restriction on the redu reimbursement from 100 per cent. to 80 per c employers with 20 or more employees. They woul two reimbursement rates—one for firms with few 20 employees, which would recover all the SSP the and another of 80 per cent. for the remaining firms not surprise the hon. Member for Roxburg Berwickshire that, while appreciating the concerns has expressed, the Government are unable to acc amendments.

When my right hon. Friend the Secretary o examined the national insurance fund to establish w its ingoings and outgoings were in balance, and w contributions could be reduced in any way, he wa of the intention to follow the route that we have fo in respect of SSP, and consciously made extra and provision within the alterations to national ins contributions, to devise a package that woul particular help to smaller employers.

The reductions are specifically geared to contri payable by employers in respect of employees sub the lowest rates—that is, earning £185 or less a From April 1991, the lower rates of 5, 7 and 9 per ce be reduced by 0·4 per cent. to 4·6 per cent., 6·6 pe and 8·6 per cent. respectively. That compares w much smaller reduction of 0·05 per cent. in the emp contribution in respect of employees earning mo £185 a week. Concentrating reductions on the low will give extra help to small employers in particul

The precise implications for individual employ vary considerably, according to the rates of pay th employees enjoy and the level of sickness experie their work force. Assuming the normal incide sickness, in many small firms any extra SSP costs offset by reductions in the employers' national ins contributions. On Second Reading, my right hon. gave examples of the positive savings that will accr least some employers. Therefore, we do not believe t amendments are either justified or necessary.

Mr. Tony Banks: The Minister describes w believes will happen, but it might not turn out like t what extent will the new arrangement be monitored Department, so that if some of the claims made b Members prove to be true, amendments can be pro

Mr. Scott: Elizabeth I said that when she die would find Calais engraved on her heart. When "monitoring" will be found engraved on my hea constantly monitor every aspect of the social s system, and that is often done by independent re organisations that the Department commissio monitor the impact of social security changes.

Mr. Ian Bruce: As someone who has argued that employers' national insurance contributions should be lower, I ask my right hon. Friend to say whether employers as a whole will incur less cost under the new arrangements. The note on the financial implications of the Bill says that it will save my right hon. Friend's Department £250 million each year, but will the national insurance fund stand to lose that £250 million—or an even higher sum?

Mr. Scott: Broadly, the savings that employers will gain as a result of reductions in national insurance contributions will offset a large part of the extra costs that they will incur because of the reduction in their reimbursement for statutory sick pay. There will be a saving which will help to fund other improvements in the social security system. Many small employers will find that, because of the way in which we have altered the structure of national insurance, there is no cost to them. Some may see some savings as a result of the changes that we are making.

There are two other reasons why I do not believe we should accept the amendments. It is quite common for Ministers to stand at the Dispatch Box and to plead administrative difficulties with any changes. In this case there will not merely be administrative difficulties for the Department of Social Security and the Inland Revenue in operating a dual system of reimbursement. There would be practical problems and increased costs for employers were we to go down that route.

Many companies, especially small businesses, have fluctuating work forces—they may employ 20 people one week and take on 20 people the following week. Different levels of reimbursement for statutory sick pay would severely complicate the employer's work. Also, monitoring checks have to be carried out by the Department of Social Security and the Inland Revenue to ensure that the right contributions were being paid by employers and that the correct amount of statutory sick pay was being paid to the employees. Administrative difficulties would look quite large in the public sector and for the employers.

The hon. Member for Newham, North-West asked me to cover the question of additional costs. I do not think that the Committee would expect me to overlook that point. The latest figures suggest that about 85 per cent. of businesses—2·5 million firms operating in this country—have under 20 employees. It is estimated that, if we went down the road proposed in the amendment, the public expenditure savings that we will make because of the Bill would be reduced by about £45 million, which is a far from insignificant sum.

For all the reasons that I have outlined, we do not believe that that is the right course. Bearing in mind the fact that the average absence of sickness is only three weeks and that 90 per cent. of absences are over within eight weeks, we do not believe that the implications for employers will be significant.

As I said in response to an earlier intervention, we shall of course monitor the position, but I have to invite the Committee to reject the amendments.

5.45 pm

Mr. Kirkwood: That was a genuinely disappointing response. I get a clear impression—although I do not necessarily put the blame on the Minister—from the Minister's reply that he has no idea of the difficulties which are being thrust upon small businesses. He may say, quite reasonably, that it is a matter not of hi of the Department of Employment and no impression that he understands the Bill will cause.

At the end of his speech he helpful excluded businesses with fewer than 20 e in the amendment, it would cost £45 m is not worth a candle—it is not worth th and administrative inconvenience and d cause. Out of a departmental headline —£55 billion next year—£45 million is compared to the stress, anxiety and ang throughout the country in small busines measure.

I warn the Minister that I shall s speeches to people who send complaint that he is writing to organisations businesses. However, they have difficul with their membership. By the time down to the shop floor or to the corner will have been done and the anger will blame them for being angry. The Hous and I urge hon. Members to reflect that on the amendment and voting against refusal to accept the amendments.

Question put, That the amendment

The Committee divided: Ayes 128, N

Division No. 13]

AYES

Allen, Graham	Fields, Ter
Alton, David	Fisher, Ma
Anderson, Donald	Flannery, M
Archer, Rt Hon Peter	Flynn, Paul
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy	Foot, Rt Ho
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*	George, Br
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*	Gilbert, Rt
Barron, Kevin	Gordon, Mi
Battle, John	Grant, Ben
Beckett, Margaret	Griffiths, W
Beggs, Roy	Grocott, Br
Benton, Joseph	Hardy, Pet
Bermingham, Gerald	Hattersley,
Boyes, Roland	Haynes, Fr
Bray, Dr Jeremy	Heal, Mrs S
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*	Hinchliffe,
Buckley, George J.	Hogg, N. (C
Caborn, Richard	Home Robe
Callaghan, Jim	Howarth, G
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*	Howells, G
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*	Hughes, Jo
Campbell-Savours, D. N.	Hughes, Ro
Carlile, Alex *(Mont g)*	Hughes, Ro
Clay, Bob	Hughes, Si
Clelland, David	Janner, Gr
Clwyd, Mrs Ann	Jones, Bar
Coleman, Donald	Jones, Mar
Corbett, Robin	Kilfedder,
Corbyn, Jeremy	Lambie, Da
Cousins, Jim	Leadbitter,
Cox, Tom	Leighton, R
Crowther, Stan	Lestor, Joa
Cryer, Bob	Lewis, Ter
Cummings, John	Litherland,
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*	Livingstone
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*	Livsey, Ric
Dixon, Don	Lloyd, Ton
Doran, Frank	Lofthouse,
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth	Loyden, Ed
Eadie, Alexander	McAllion, J
Eastham, Ken	McFall, Jo
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*	McKay, All
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*	McWilliam
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*	Mahon, Mr

Marek, Dr John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Hara, Edward
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Pike, Peter L.
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Redmond, Martin
Richardson, Jo
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terence
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Turner, Dennis
Wareing, Robert N.
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Archy Kirkwood and
Mr. A. J. Beith.

NOES

Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Butcher, John
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Day, Stephen
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Eggar, Tim
Evennett, David
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Ground, Patrick
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knox, David
Lawrence, Ivan
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
McLoughlin, Patrick
Madel, David
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Roberts, Sir Wyn *(Conwy)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Sackville, Hon Tom
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldrid*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speller, Tony
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Vall*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwi*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlingto*
Tracey, Richard
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Walden, George
Ward, John
Watts, John
Wheeler, Sir John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes
Mr. Tim Boswell and
Mr. Irvine Patnick.

Question accordingly negatived.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): On a poi
order, Miss Boothroyd. Do you know whether the H
is to receive a statement later today? Now that the
hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) has been n
Secretary of State for the Environment, he may like to
this opportunity of making real the promises he mad
the dying hours of yesterday morning's contest whe
said that he intends to abolish the poll tax.

The Second Deputy Chairman: The House is alw
happy to be kept abreast of the news, but that has not
to do with our Standing Orders or the Statutory Sick
Bill, discussion of which we shall continue.

Mr. Michael Meacher (Oldham, West): I beg to m
amendment No. 8, in page 1, line 14, leave out from 'o
'and' in line 15 and insert

'so much of each of those payments as was made in respe
the first two weeks of

(a) a period of incapacity for work, or
(b) two or more such periods separated by a perio
not more than two weeks, and 100 per cent. o
remainder of those payments.'.

The Second Deputy Chairman: With this it will
convenient to consider new clause 1—*Limitation
restricted reimbursement of statutory sick pay.*—

'The provisions of this Act, insofar as they amend sec
9 of the Social Security and Housing Benefits Act
(recovery by employers of amounts paid by way of statu
sick pay) shall only have effect to the extent of amount
by an employer in respect of statutory sick pay paid t
employee during the first three weeks of his absence f
employment.'.

Mr. Meacher: One of the worst aspects of the Bill is
it puts at risk the employment prospects of those with p
health records. In his reply to the Second Reading deb

[Mr. Meacher]

the Minister of State said that he acknowledged the importance of that point, but he sought to reassure the House about the work of the Department of Employment in trying to promote the job opportunities of the disabled.

That misses the point. All that work, such as it is, is undermined by the Bill. The Bill will act as a greater deterrent to employers taking on disabled or chronically sick people than all the positive efforts of the Department of Employment taken together. That is what we are trying to redress, and it is the reason why we have tabled the amendment.

The amendment will retain the 100 per cent. remimbursement rate for any sick pay period after the first two weeks of sickness. For that purpose, we propose that two spells separated by an interval of two weeks or less will be treated as a single spell—a reasonable proposal—so that the 80 per cent. reimbursement rate would apply for only two weeks.

The amendment does not imply—one must always be careful to meet the procedures of the House, and although we cannot table an amendment to negate the purpose of the Bill we must get as close as possible to doing so while keeping within the rules—that we would be in favour of reducing the reimbursement rate to below 100 per cent. for any period. To prevent that, Parliament would have had to have rejected the whole Bill, but, unwisely, it did not do so on Second Reading.

Therefore, we tabled the amendment to draw attention to one of the Bill's worst effects—the fact that employers will be unwilling to employ not only people who have had prolonged or repeated periods of sickness but those whom they believe, rightly or wrongly, may have poor health prospects. In future, such people will clearly be at risk.

6 pm

There is plenty of evidence of job discrimination against disabled persons or those who suffer from poor health. On Second Reading, I quoted the study carried out by the Spastics Society entitled "An Equal Chance for Disabled People? A Study of Discrimination in Employment". I said that its findings were that there was

"systematic evidence of the most blatant discrimination by employers."—[*Official Report*, 26 November 1990; Vol. 181, c. 649.]

Although I did not say this on Second Reading, in the further analysis of this debate I shall quote its report more fully:

"Employers were sent identical pairs of applications to jobs advertised, the only difference being that one application was a non-disabled person and the other from someone who mentioned that they had a disability of some kind. It was found that able-bodied applicants were 1·6 times more likely than disabled applicants to be offered an interview. On the basis of these tests, the researchers concluded that 'disabled applicants had far less than an equal chance.'"

Those are the facts about employers being prepared to offer an interview to disabled persons or to those with chronic ill health. The disparity in offering jobs to disabled or chronically sick people is far greater.

On Second Reading, the Minister of State mentioned a survey entitled "Employment and Handicap" by Patricia Prescott-Clarke of Social and Community Planning Research, which was published this year. It found that there was strong evidence that people who become sick or disabled while in employment are already in a very vulnerable position. For example, nearly one third of those who had to leave their job for health reasons had been dismissed or had felt pressurised into leaving because of impairment.

The study found:

"Employers appear to be more likely to dismiss employees of short acquaintance who had acquired an impairment that affects their work than those who have worked for them for several years."

If that is the attitude of employers to disabled or chronically sick people already in their employment, what will be their attitude to those applying for jobs? That is the issue that the amendment addresses. There is clear evidence of substantial discrimination against those already in employment. We believe that the Bill will create a much higher and more difficult recruitment hurdle for disabled people.

Another vulnerable group whom we do not discuss as much as we should is those with a record of mental illness. Many people who have a degree of mental illness are capable of entering at least the fringes of the job market if they have support. Responding to the Government's proposed extension of the statutory sick pay scheme to 28 weeks, the National Association for Mental Health gave this warning:

"Shifting the payment of SSP to employers will add to discriminatory practices and make employees vulnerable to dismissal if the employer chooses to investigate the health records of those with a history of mental illness."

I could go on giving much more evidence, but the picture is perfectly clear: disabled people are at a considerable disadvantage.

It was inveighed on Second Reading that I have it in for employers and that I think that all employers are bad. Many employers take their responsibilities seriously and try to employ people who have a measure of disability, but many are reluctant to do so, and if given any incentive, encouragement or excuse not to do so will be only too pleased to take it. We must give employers an incentive to employ people with chronic health or disability problems, not a disincentive. That is the force of the amendment.

I have been commenting on the position as it is now, but what will be the position for those highly vulnerable people when the Bill gives employers an added real financial deterrent to employing them? Perhaps the Under-Secretary's reply will be along the lines of what the Minister for Social Security and Disabled People said on the last amendment. She may argue that having to bear 20 per cent. of any sick-pay cost will not make very much difference to employers' recruitment practices.

The Minister for Social Security and Disabled People seemed to be saying that the effects of the Bill would be fairly minimal and would not act as much discouragement, even to small employers. We dispute that. It is true that the effect will be fairly small for many employers. One can quote averages, but for every favourable case quoted by the Minister or the Secretary of State on Second Reading, there are many employers who will clearly suffer significant cost disadvantages, and one must take account of the less favourable cases.

The Secretary of State is always fair when he makes these points, so I admit that I am quoting one extreme —the last 10 per cent. for whom sickness lasts more than eight weeks. Adding 20 per cent. of 28 weeks' statutory sick pay at the highest rate comes to £294, which for a small employer is certainly not a negligible sum. Moreover —this is an important point—if the Government are right about a high proportion of employees being covered by

occupational sick pay schemes, the £294 that small employers will have to pay may be added to the much larger sum that he is already committed to paying.

We dispute the figure given by the Government because we believe that they have been exaggerating, but if they are right—I put it ad hominem to them—that about 90 per cent. of people are covered, the effect on the small employer is not only when there is a significant period of sickness costing him up to about £300 per employee but also the cost of occupational sick pay, which the Government say will apply in the vast majority of cases.

The effect on employers recruiting disabled and chronically sick people will be all the greater in the future if further reductions in the re' 'ursement rate are made. All the arguments are prem . on the 80 per cent. rate applying, and of course that will be the rate for a time.

Many of us have listened to the Secretary of State choose his words carefully and say that he has "no plans to do so". I admit that my memories of Whitehall are somewhat distant, although they are soon to be refreshed, but I remember that when Governments do not wish to admit to something they say, "We have no plans to do so." Technically, being somewhat economical with the truth, that is probably correct—there are no immediate plans lying about. Ministers have used such phrases but, a few years later, we have been told, "Circumstances have changed", "Different conditions prevail", "There has been a further review". Perhaps there has even been a new face in the Department—these things do happen. What we were assured would never happen has somehow come about. Under the amendment, if there are further reductions in the reimbursement rate, the disadvantageous effect—the deterrent to the recruitment of chronically sick or disabled people—will be all the greater.

I admit that I am not talking to a packed Chamber. I wish that more people were listening to the argument. Under our amendment, whatever changes are made in the reimbursement rate for the third and subsequent weeks, there will still be 100 per cent. reimbursement for the first two weeks. I hope that I have made the case that this is a serious point. I should be the first to admit that Conservative Members are concerned about the employment prospects of disabled people. I therefore hope that they will accept this as a non-partisan amendment. We believe that the Government are putting the employment prospects of disabled people at risk. They are an important section of the work force. We believe that the Government's measure is unnecessary. I hope that they will reconsider the amendment.

Mr. Kirkwood: I support the comments of the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher). New clause 1, which was tabled in my name and that of my hon. Friends, is another attempt to limit the damage that will be inflicted by the Bill on employers and employees. Estimates have been made of average periods of sickness and so on. The new clause is an attempt to restrict the Bill's provisions to cope with the average periods of sickness in firms and businesses. Any opportunity to limit the damage that will be caused by the Bill is welcome. The new clause is a probing measure to get the Government to justify seeking wide provisions which will damage small and large businesses. I am happy to leave my comments on that basis, and I await with interest the response by the Under-Secretary of State.

Mr. Flynn: It is difficult to concentrate on this fascinating business when we have information about the remarkable appointments being made by the new Prime Minister, who is proving that at least he has a sense of humour. One of his appointments has been the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) as Secretary of State for the Environment—one of the most remarkable appointments since Caligula appointed his horse as consul

The Second Deputy Chairman: Order. I think that we should get on with the business.

Mr. Flynn: Indeed, Miss Boothroyd.

My hon. Friend the member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) referred to a debate on Second Reading which, unfortunately, did not reach a conclusion. The debate concerned the report by IFF Research Ltd. and how many firms had been covered by occupational schemes. We should bear in mind what the report said and find guidance from it. I am sure that hon. Members used their time usefully in the past 48 hours to read that report. Two days ago, the Secretary of State for Social Security said that the Government did not know exactly how many people were covered by sick pay schemes—a nice confession of the ignorance on which the proposition is based. He went on to say that 90 per cent. of firms have such schemes.

The IFF report provides the clearest evidence we have. Paragraph 2.5 states:

"The proportion of private sector establishments offering sick pay schemes cover is as follows".

The report shows that for short-term cover only, it is 42 per cent.; for short and long-term cover, it is a mere 14 per cent.; and for long-term cover, it is less than 1 per cent. The key figure is 14 per cent., which would be comparable.

The Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Tony Newton): I cannot see why that is the relevant figure. We are talking about what counts as short-term sick pay. It is clear from the report that the coverage of short-term sickness is much greater than coverage of long-term sickness.

6.15 pm

Mr. Flynn: I said that it is the key figure because it will be important when the Bill comes into effect. The Bill gives the Government greater powers by order to make cuts over a long period until, in effect, the scheme disappears. I could argue at length with the right hon. Gentleman on this point, but I intend to speak briefly. That percentage is a long way from the 90 per cent. figure which Ministers repeatedly trumpet.

Every organisation that represents people with disabilities is genuinely worried that the Bill will harm the job prospects of such people. I should love to hear about any such group that supports the Bill. The opposition from those organisations has not been dulled by Monday's debate. They still vehemently oppose the Bill. I hope that the Under-Secretary will say that the Government have taken this into account.

The only measure that we have of the proportion of people with disabilities in employment is the number of registered disabled. The record of industry and Government Departments is shameful. Half the target of 3 per cent. has been achieved by the Department of Social

[Mr. Flynn]

Security, which is presenting the Bill. I should have thought that that Department would blaze a trail by employing at least that target of 3 per cent.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Mrs. Gillian Shephard): The Opposition alleged that if 80 per cent. reimbursement applied for the whole period for which SSP is payable, it would lead to employers not employing or discriminating against people with disabilities or people who suffer from health problems. I should have thought that, on Second Reading, my right hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security and Disabled People laid that argument to rest.

The Opposition quote a report compiled by Patricia Prescott-Clarke entitled "Employment and Handicap" and published in June this year. That report states that, for the majority of disabled people,

> "The time taken to get a job was relatively short. It was shortest for those not in work at onset—(64 per cent. got a job within two months of looking compared to 56 per cent. of those having held an onset job.)"

Clearly, it must take some disabled people some time to get a job, but the problem is by no means as widespread as the Opposition have said.

The report to which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State referred extensively on Second Reading, showed that half the people with disabilities in work took less than five days a year off for sickness or treatment. As my right hon. Friend pointed out then, in general, people with disabilities have work records as good as, if not better than, those of the able-bodied. The figures certainly do not suggest that the SSP liabilities of employers will be any greater in relation to employees with disabilities than they will be for other employees.

Of course, many factors other than SSP are important in the determination of job opportunities for the disabled, and our Department and the Department of Employment have developed policies to promote the employment of such people—not least our own proposals for a brand-new benefit, the disability working allowance, to be introduced in April 1992. Having listened carefully and with interest to Opposition Members' proposed solutions to the problem, I can find little logic in them; certainly, the administrative complexities that an employer would incur in operating different rules for different employees, depending on how long they had been ill, hardly bear thinking about.

Speaking to the earlier group of amendments, the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) complained about the complexity of the SSP scheme, and I am therefore astonished that he should be prepared to support the introduction of yet more complexity. Let us think what the implementation of new clause 1 would mean in practice. Each month, when an employer paid his tax and national insurance contributions to the Inland Revenue, he would need to establish which payments of SSP attracted 80 per cent. reimbursement and which attracted 100 per cent. He would also have to work out whether he could claim additional compensation. In the worst scenario, he might have to try to apportion a monthly SSP payment for an employee between the part on which he could claim 100 per cent. and the part on which he could claim only 80 per cent.

Attempting to enforce the proposals in either the amendment or the new clause would be an administrative nightmare for employers. Indeed, the Department and the Inland Revenue would encounter just as many difficulties in trying to ensure that the correct deductions in respect of SSP were being made for employers' national insurance contributions, and that the right amounts were being paid to employees. I accept that some employers may be unhappy about the move from 100 per cent. to 80 per cent reimbursement—I understand that—but I suspect that they would be even less happy if they had to operate the Opposition's proposed arrangements.

Although I do not want to accuse the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) of tabling a wrecking amendment, I am bound to say that he seemed to imply that that was his intention, and I can certainly think of no better way of wrecking the operation of SSP—which does involve some complexities—than the system that he has proposed.

Hon. Members have mentioned the problems that small employers may experience, although that was the subject of the first group of amendments. We have costed the proposals in amendment No. 8 and new clause 1: the cost of the amendment would be about £107 million in 1991-92 and those of the new clause about £89 million. Cost is by no means an insignificant factor, but the main point is that the administrative nightmare proposed by Opposition Members—apparently in all seriousness—is not worthy of consideration, and should be rejected.

Mr. Meacher: I find the Minister's explanation unconvincing. I know that the Opposition are expected to say that every time, but I genuinely mean it: I do not think that the Minister has answered our case at all.

Quoting from a survey from which I, too, quoted, the Minister suggested that it took a relatively short time for most disabled people to obtain a job. I am glad to hear it. She also said that the great majority of disabled people took fewer than five days off for treatment, and, in general, had good work records. If that is true, it is very reassuring but, as I have said to the Minister of State and repeated today, it really misses the point. We are not discussing whether disabled people take a long time to find jobs under the current arrangements or whether they take only a few days off in a working year; the point is whether the Bill will act as a strong financial deterrent, dissuading employers from taking on disabled people. The survey from which the Minister quoted is entirely irrelevent in that context.

I said all this on Second Reading, and I hoped that what I said had been taken on board. One likes to think that one's remarks are mulled over in the bowels of Whitehall after Second Readings, but apparently that is not the case. I am very disappointed. Let me repeat, then, that we are considering the effects of the Bill. The Minister has said nothing that diminishes our anxiety and apprehension: we fear that the Bill will have a considerable effect in reducing recruitment of disabled people. The Minister of State may shake his head, but we need some evidence.

I appreciate that we are talking about a system that will operate in the future—that, to that extent, the scheme is hypothetical, and that it is therefore impossible to produce any factual, empirical evidence. The likelihood is, however, that the scheme will act as a considerable disincentive.

Mr. Scott: All these scares were put about when the SSP scheme was introduced, and exactly the same arguments were advanced at the time of the extension to 28 weeks

There is absolutely no evidence that the scheme has had such an effect. Given all the pressures designed to encourage the employment of disabled people that I mentioned on Second Reading, I do not believe that these proposals will make so much as a ripple on the pond.

Mr. Meacher: That is a very complacent forecast. The right hon. Gentleman says—I do not know whether this has been factually verified—that the introduction of the scheme and the extension to 28 weeks had little effect. Even if that is true, in neither instance was there any disincentive for employers. What we are discussing today, for the first time, is a significant disincentive for a number of employers—not all, but a significant number—particularly small employers. Small employers have to keep a close watch on the margins if they are to survive, especially in today's declining market. The right hon. Gentleman underestimates the probable negative impact of the Bill.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *rose*——

Mr. Flynn *rose*——

Mr. Meacher: I will give way to my hon. Friend first, and then to the hon. Lady.

Mr. Flynn: I drew attention to at least one ripple on Second Reading. I do not claim that my evidence was entirely convincing, as it was based on some questions that I had tabled the previous week. The most detailed answer that I received showed a decline in the number of people with disabilities who were employed by the Welsh Office, coinciding with the introduction of SSP in 1983. I am not suggesting that the two events are necessarily connected; it is a case of "post hoc, ergo propter hoc". But the Government are trying to make their case, and I feel that we should at least be given the complete picture. That ripple may well be a flood.

Mr. Meacher: I think that that constitutes significant evidence. My hon. Friend has admitted that the decline in recruitment of disabled and chronically sick people may not be solely—or even mainly—a result of the introduction of SSP, but the Minister should accept that, just as I cannot prove a causal relationship, he cannot prove the opposite.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *rose*——

Mr. Meacher: I know that the hon. Lady has been desperately trying to get in, so I will give her a chance.

Mrs. Shephard: Most of the hon. Gentleman's comments have been based on the question whether our proposals introduce a disincentive. Does he not accept that the administrative nonsense that he has proposed would be the greatest possible disincentive?

Mr. Meacher: I was coming to the second part of the Minister's argument. At first, she drew an irrelevant analogy when she referred to previous experience with regard to the time taken to get the job and time off. Her other argument against the amendment is that it would be administratively complex and quite costly. She said that it would cost about £100 million.

We are not recommending the ideal solution. We believe that a cost of £100 million as opposed to allowing the Bill to progress without amendment would still be advantageous in net terms. On the other hand, we would be the first to say that it is not ideal to drop to 80 per cent. and then to try to protect a vulnerable section of the market by way of an administrative complexity at a cost of £100 million. That is not the ideal solution. Ideally, we should stay as we are with 100 per cent. reimbursement.

6.30 pm

The Minister's arguments about administrative complexity and cost are not the point. She forces us to use the amendment as a device. We have been prevented from negating the Bill as a whole, so we have to produce a second best. I readily admit that, but is not that a great deal better leaving the Bill unamended?

Will the Minister look me straight in the eye and say that she believes that there will be no disadvantage to the recruitment of chronically sick people, the disabled, people with poor health records and older workers who are desperately trying to regain a place in the employment market if the 100 per cent. reimbursement of sick pay is reduced to 80 per cent.? I do not see how she can possibly say that. If she can and she honestly believes it, she deserves to defeat the amendment. However, we believe that the amendment should stand.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I agree totally with the points made by my right hon. Friend the Minister of State on Second Reading when assurances were given on that particular point.

Amendment negatived.

Mr. Kirkwood: I beg to move amendment No. 5, in page 1, line 27, leave out 'or lesser'.

The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Sir Paul Dean): With this it will be convenient to consider amendment No. 10, in page 1, line 27, at end insert—

'(1ZB) A statutory instrument containing an order under subsection (1ZA) above shall not be made unless a draft of the instrument has been laid before Parliament and approved by a resolution of each House.'.

Mr. Kirkwood: I recognise the unanimity of view on the Opposition Benches about my amendment. Independently, and without collusion, the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) and his colleagues and my colleagues and I decided that it would be sensible to table amendment No. 5.

The amendment is designed to leave out two small words, but their omission would make a great difference to the way in which employers and their representatives consider the Bill. The purpose and thrust of the amendment is crystal clear. It will restrict the power that the Government are taking in clause 1 to vary the rebate. The amendment would make it impossible for the Government to reduce the rebate level beyond 80 per cent.

In contemplating that, a number of important points should be made. The fundamental point was raised on Second Reading. Why do the Government need to take this power at all? By virtue of changing circumstances and the extent and complexity of the social security system, we know that the Department faces the prospect of updating, improving and amending social security law on a yearly basis. In relation to another matter the Secretary of State said the other day that he thought that there was a need for consolidation because of the complexity of the numerical labelling of some of the amendments. I do not know whether he meant that as a threat.

The Government have regular opportunities every year to make amendments to primary legislation relating to social security. There is a suspicion that, if they are looking

[Mr. Kirkwood]

for the ability to make those changes by order, they are doing that with a purpose in mind. They are trying to make it easier for themselves. I suspect that they will give themselves an enabling power to introduce secondary legislation and then do just that. If they do that, the Bill gives them the power both to increase and to decrease the rebate. The amendment would remove by statutory instrument their ability to reduce the percentage level of the rebate.

Employers' representatives believe that that power is not in the Bill by accident. They believe that it is designed to be used and that it will be used. They quote precedents like the redundancy rebate schemes which they had to endure in the past. They are deeply suspicious of this part of clause 1. There was some discussion about this on Second Reading. However, the Minister should consider it again and give us specific guarantees, if she will not accept the amendment, that there is no intention now, and no intention in future, to reduce the level of rebate that goes back to employers. I hope that she will go that far, but even if she does, she will know that Ministers, on this day of all days, are transient creatures.

Mr. Newton: It was announced some minutes ago that, for the moment at least, I am not a transient creature.

Mr. Kirkwood: The Secretary of State has put the House out of its collective agony. I am genuinely pleased to hear what the Secretary of State has said, and I look forward to many constructive hours of debate with him and his ministerial team.

There is no linkage between the level of rebate and the level of employers' national insurance contributions. The Government could perfectly properly say that they have tried to balance the effect of the changes in the rebate by making marginal and balancing adjustments to compensate for the extra additional cost for employers. There is no guarantee in any legislation that in future, if the rebate is reduced further—perish the thought—compensation will be paid in a balancing way by an alteration in the employers' rate of national insurance contribution.

We are looking for clear assurances about that. It is not just a matter of the Government taking powers that we do not think they need and which if they are to use them, they will do so to the detriment of employers. There is no balancing provision or power. I have heard no statements from responsible Ministers to the effect that if the rebate is reduced in future there will be a guaranteed equalisation of the effect through a change in the level of the rate of national insurance contributions.

It is blatantly obvious what the amendment seeks to do. It is glaringly obvious to Opposition Members and to the employers' organisations that the Government will have the power to introduce things in an unnecessary way. The Government have not yet made a case in any statements made by the social security team that the fears that have been expressed to me by employers and their organisations are not well founded on that important issue. I hope that the Government will take the opportunity of this amendment to try to allay some of the fears that are being expressed with great passion and vigour by employers and their organisations.

Ms. Short: I support amendment No. 5. Great minds think alike and both main Opposition parties tabled an amendment on the same lines. Amendment No. 10 is le robust, and it will be indefensible if the Government not accept it. They would then have to admit that t whole structure of the Bill is intended to enable them any future Government to erode over time and by steal the statutory sick pay scheme. I hope that th Government will not get the opportunity, but it dangerous to allow on to the statute book powers th could be misused by any Government.

As we said on Second Reading, when there w agreement between the Opposition and the hon. Memb for Beverley (Mr. Cran), who does not seem to attending to the debate at the moment although he is in place, it is impossible to understand why the Governme should have introduced the Bill unless the thinking behi it is, in the long term, to erode the reimbursement employers and to privatise sick pay over time, handing t burden ov to the employers.

I know that the right hon. Member for Chelsea (M Scott) was a little annoyed when I said that I found difficult to accept his word that there are no such plans. course, I accept those words in their tightest and small meaning and I know that he would not deliberate mislead the House. However, as my hon. Friends ha said, the fact that the Government do not have a detailed plans to implement right now does not mean th they do not have that strategic long-term intention.

On Second Reading, the Secretary of State went to a l of trouble to stress that the cost to employers—we kn that employees will lose £100 million—was neutral. laid a lot of stress on that, saying that his first stateme had suggested that the reimbursement under the n formula for employers might amount to only £200 millio but that since then he had firmed up the details of t national insurance proposals, amounting to £250 millio which meant that the package was neutral.

The right hon. Gentleman said that he thought that the complaints from small employers would go away on they understood the details of the national insuran compensation. We now know—I think that the right ho Gentleman accepts this—that the complaints have n gone away and that, as my hon. Friend the Member f Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) said earlier, t National Federation of Self Employed and Sm Businesses has not been reassured by our Second Readi debate and is still angry and deeply hostile to the packa

There is no point in the Government introducing t Bill. As we know, they could have saved £100 million changing the thresholds and the uprating figures relati to the amount of statutory sick pay. The Bill has nothi to do with the saving that the Government were seeking make from sick pay so that they could fund other nee groups, such as poor pensioners and elderly people livi in residential homes. The Government have taken t opportunity to introduce legislation that opens the door the erosion over time of a state-protected natio insurance sickness benefit scheme for people at work.

6.45 pm

I prefer honesty in these matters. There is gra disagreement across the House on social security issu but I know that the DSS Ministers are honourable peop Nevertheless, I am totally perplexed, because the makes no sense whatsoever, unless what I have suggest

is the Government's intention. It is unacceptable for the Government to say, "We have no plans, but never say never."

The Government have tried this sort of thing before. They have made it clear that they want to move the burden of sick pay on to employers. They had a big fight with the employers' organisations the first time round and were forced to give in.

Although we have been told that this is wrong, I firmly believe that the indecent haste with which the Bill is being handled is designed to prevent that resurgence of opposition from the employers' organisations. I can think of no other reason. It is extraordinary to have a Second Reading on Monday and Committee stage on the Floor of the House on Wednesday. I am sure that that is deliberately intended to prevent the resistance that previous Bills have engendered from building up again.

I cannot see any other reason, although Ministers have said that the Government have moved with such haste because they are anxious to give the employers' organisations the full details in plenty of time for them to prepare for the implementation of the provisions. I cannot believe that. Although I can understand a certain amount of speed, this indecent haste does not make sense. Having analysed what the Government are doing, it is my belief that the intention to erode sick pay provisions by stealth is the whole explanation for the Bill.

We know that when the Secretary of State says that the effect will be neutral this year, it will not be neutral next year or the year after, unless the right hon. Gentleman can give us the assurance that the £250 million reimbursement to employers will increase steadily as the years go by—*[Interruption.]* I think that the right hon. Gentleman is seeking to give that assurance.

Mr. Newton: We are talking about figures that are related to a percentage of earnings. We are talking about reductions to 4·6 per cent. and whatever the other figures are—from 5, 7 and 9. The figures are a percentage of earnings, so as earnings rise, the figures will rise.

Ms. Short: Good. That is the logic and we now have another commitment on the record which, I am sure, will be gratefully received.

However, that does not remove from the Bill the power to change the percentage and to reduce it from 80 per cent. over time without the Government even seeking an affirmative resolution in the House. We are seeking two amendments. The first is more robust and is preferable. It seeks to remove that power and to require any Government who wish to change that 80 per cent. reimbursement to come back to the House with new legislation and to argue their case properly. Any such proposal would be so serious that that must be the right course.

If the Government cannot stomach amendment No. 5, we also have a gentler proposal, but that would mean the Government admitting that they are wrong, which is something that Governments rarely do. Indeed, the Government would change Prime Minister rather than do that. Amendment No. 10 could be more easily conceded by the Government because it simply seeks a positive resolution of the House for any change from the 80 per cent. reimbursement. I hope that the Secretary of State will say that he accepts amendment No. 10.

On Second Reading, the right hon. Gentleman said that a Prayer could be tabled against such a resolution and that, if determined, the Opposition could bring the matter to the Floor of the House, but surely he and the Government will admit that the proposal to move to a lower than 80 per cent. reimbursement is serious and significant to our social security policy and to the way in which we provide for the protection of employees who are sick. Surely, therefore, in the framework of the statute, such a change should be debated in the House as a matter of course.

I hope that the Government can reassure us somewhat. I am not trying to accuse them of having such intentions over time simply out of opposition to their proposals. My intellect can see no reason for the Government taking the trouble to prepare and table the Bill unless that is their intention over time. I hope that, at the very least, the Government will concede amendment No. 10, which would mean that they could not bring about such a change by stealth because it would have to be debated in the House.

Mr. Newton: The hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) ranged fairly widely over many of the points that were made on Second Reading and which have been reiterated in some of our debates earlier today. In view of the pressure on time, I hope that hon. Members will understand if I do not again go over all the ground covered in my extensive speech on Monday afternoon. Indeed, many of those points have been made by my right hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security and Disabled People.

My next point may seem unduly provocative, but that is not intended to be the case. I find something slightly odd in the spectacle of the hon. Members for Ladywood and for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) and their colleagues presenting themselves this afternoon and this evening as defenders of the interests of employers, when the Labour Government invented and introduced the selective employment tax as a major tax on all jobs. When they were finally pushed out of that tax, they invented the national insurance surcharge.

If I remember rightly, by the time that we took office and abolished it, the surcharge amounted to about £3 billion. I have not checked the figure, but my recollection is that £3 billion of additional costs were imposed on employers, both small and large. It had absolutely nothing to do with insurance. It was simply an impost designed to finance the Labour Government's spending ambitions. Yet the hon. Lady and the hon. Gentleman make an interesting song and dance about sums of money measured at about 0·05 per cent. of labour costs throughout the economy. It is extraordinary.

It is important that the hon. Lady should understand that the proposals in the Bill have no effect of any nature on the entitlement of any employee.

Ms. Short: The Minister speaks about a Conservative Government who doubled VAT as soon as they took power and increased inflation massively. Every survey of small business shows that VAT tends to be their biggest problem. In a constituency such as mine, there are many small businesses and small employers. They tend to vote Labour and they prosper when the people who live in Ladywood prosper. It is not the case that small businesses

[Ms. Short]

belong ideologically with the Government. Their interests lie much more closely with the ordinary people in society, for whom Labour speaks. That is our position.

Mr. Newton: I shall return to a more light-handed mode and simply observe that if the hon. Lady really believes that, she will believe anything.

Mr. Kirkwood *indicated assent.*

Mr. Newton: I am glad to see that at least on that point I have the support of the Liberal Democrats. I am duly grateful to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood).

I hope that those perhaps unwise remarks have not unduly disturbed the scene, Sir Paul. I see you looking at me with a faint air of disapproval. I shall return more directly to what the hon. Lady said. As reference has been made to it, perhaps I should begin by quoting from my remarks on Second Reading on Monday afternoon. I said:

"We have no plans to make further changes, but given the way that matters have been developing and the continuing need to examine priorities across the whole spectrum of social security, it seems sensible to have a provision that is capable of being changed. . . . A large part of the social security system, including nearly all the rates of benefit—quite apart from the whole range of other rules—is in a form that does not lock it into primary legislation, so that changes can be made by secondary legislation. Governments of all complexions have acknowledged that that is a sensible way of dealing with social security matters."—[*Official Report*, 26 November 1990; Vol. 181, c. 651-52.]

Similar arrangements apply to national insurance contributions. There are powers to vary them by secondary legislation, subject to certain parameters.

The words that I quoted were not scripted. They were in response to a request by the hon. Member for Oldham, West to comment on that point. To be honest, when I read them I thought that they were rather good and perfectly sensible, so I decided to repeat them in my speech this afternoon.

Mr. John Battle (Leeds, West): I am not sure whether I prefer the Minister in his ideological or sympathetic mode. It does not seem to make too much difference. Does he accept that there is a crucial difference between simply altering the rate and altering the structural relationship between employer and employee contributions? To level down the percentage from 80 per cent. to 60 per cent. would change the relationship. It is a question not simply of uprating or downrating, but of changing the structural relationship. Why did the Government decide to move away from the affirmative to the negative procedure?

Mr. Newton: It is not a question of moving away from the affirmative to the negative procedure in this case. I shall come to that in a moment. The hon. Gentleman's first point was that it would be appropriate to use a different procedure for a structural change. That is precisely why we are debating the legislation today. A structural change—if that is the phrase that we want to use—is what the Bill proposes. It would create a move away from 100 per cent. reimbursement—for practical purposes the contribution is now 107 per cent.—to less than 100 per cent., or 80 per cent. It is entirely proper that we should come to the House with primary legislation to effect that change. Indeed, that is the primary legislation that we are debating.

The Bill proposes to make a structural c
introduce a percentage figure. It then see
reasonable to take powers to enable the perce
varied in secondary legislation in exactly the s
across a wide range of provisions in the social s
national insurance systems.

Mr. Meacher: Before the Minister pu
argument further, I suggest that there is a majo
between changing the national insurance rate
often reasonably changed by marginal percen
light of increasing benefit levels, increasing c
state of the fund—and reducing the reimburse
employer from, say, 80 per cent. to conc
without coming back to the Houses of Parlia
the affirmative procedure. That is an entire
matter, and there is no precedent for it.

Mr. Newton: Again, I do not wish to p
discussion unnecessarily because I hope to say
marginally helpful to the hon. Lady in a fe
There is not much point in describing changes
insurance contributions as marginal, and
secondary means, when what seem to be smal
employers' national insurance contributions—
been adverted to many times during this disc
amount to substantial sums.

The standard rate of employers' contributi
reduced only from 10·45 per cent. to 10·4 per c
0·05 per cent. One cannot get more marginal t
is worth about £100 million out of the £250 mi
reduction. Whatever arguments the hon.
adduces, he should not suggest that we can
marginal changes by secondary means in
security and national insurance systems. Some
substantial. However, I shall not dwell furt
point.

I cannot advise the House to accept amend
tabled by the hon. Member for Rox
Berwickshire, and with which the Opposition
team has tagged along, if I read the amend
correctly.

Ms. Short: We tabled amendments indepe

Mr. Newton: Oh, they tabled the same am
the same time. I do not wish to dispute
precedent. I am sure that the amendments we
exactly the same moment. I certainly do
become involved in an argument about which
I accept that both parties had the
Even-handedly, I tell both parties that I cann
amendment that would involve more primar
before further change could be made in the
changes proposed in the Bill.

The hon. Member for Ladywood reasonab
weight on amendment No. 10, suggesting tha
at least consider adopting the affirmative rat
negative procedure. It would not be appropria
in respect of a proposal to increase the perc
highly unlikely that an increase would
controversial. This is another rash remark, Si
suspect that if, in the wake of the legislation,
a proposal to increase the percentage, I would
by the hon. Member for Oldham, West for
giveaway for our rich friends, the employers
then be faced with a totally different argume

Mr. Meacher: Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman would like to be my speech writer?

Mr. Newton: I am not volunteering to do that; my style is much too calm, measured and low key to have any chance of qualifying for that post.

There is force in the argument for Parliament to take a positive further decision about any significant reductions in the percentage were such a change to be contemplated.

In the light of recent events, I approach today's proceedings with even greater magnanimity than usual. Although I am not ready to advise the House to accept the amendment, I am willing to give an undertaking that I shall bring forward in another place an amendment to provide for the affirmative procedure were a further reduction in the percentage proposed.

7 pm

Mr. Kirkwood: Can the right hon. Gentleman foresee any circumstances in which, were the rebate reduced, there would not be a corresponding compensatory allowance through a reduction in employers' national insurance contributions?

Mr. Newton: I cannot give the hon. Gentleman the exact assurance he seeks, for practical and legal reasons. My statutory duty, which I hope I have faithfully fulfilled this year, is to look at the rates of contribution in relation to the balance in the national insurance fund. My prime responsibility is to be concerned with the balance in the fund and I must bear that in mind when considering employers' contributions. For that reason, I cannot give the hon. Gentleman the direct guarantee he seeks.

In the light of the experience gained from what I proposed this year, and with a reasonable degree of conviction that I shall carry the hon. Gentleman with me, I should certainly expect, were any further changes to be made to the percentage—we have no such plans now—to take into account the balance in the national insurance fund. I note that the hon. Member for Ladywood is smiling. I accept that that undertaking falls short of the straightforward, clear-cut guarantee which the hon. Gentleman sought. I hope that the hon. Gentleman understands why I cannot give that guarantee.

I always seek to be open with the House about such matters and it is not inconceivable that this Government, or any future one, might make a judgment in particular circumstances that it was reasonable to propose a further change in the percentage without compensation, or whatever, through the national insurance system. After all, the previous Labour Government came to believe that it was right to impose billions of pounds of extra costs on employers with a national insurance surcharge. They did not compensate those employers in some other way. Governments necessarily must make judgments about where the burden of taxation and the like should lie at any given time and where money is to be raised to fulfil particular social or spending objectives. The Government cannot and will not be able to escape that.

I intend to introduce an amendment in the other place to provide for the affirmative procedure where any further reduction in the percentage is proposed. In the light of that and of what I said to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire—I accept that it fell short of the undertaking he sought—I hope that the hon. Gentleman and the Opposition will withdraw the amendments.

Mr. Kirkwood: Although I am not satisfied with the Secretary of State's reply, it would be churlish not to acknowledge the concession that the right hon. Gentleman made to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short). On that basis, I shall withdraw the amendment.

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. Before the hon. Gentleman does that, I believe that the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) wants to speak.

Ms. Short: Half a loaf is better than no bread and, on the basis of the Secretary of State's undertaking, I shall not press amendment No. 10.

Mr. Kirkwood: I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Mr. Tony Banks: I beg to move amendment No. 11, in page 2, line 1, leave out subsection (3).

The First Deputy Chairman: With this it will be convenient to take the following amendments: No. 6, in page 2, line 4, at end insert

'in respect of an employer, employing twenty persons or more.'.

No. 7, in schedule, page 4, leave out lines 4 to 19.

No. 14, in schedule, page 4, line 5, column 3, leave out paragraph (a).

No. 15, in schedule, page 4, line 6, column 3, leave out paragraph (b).

No. 16 in schedule, page 4, line 12, column 3, leave out paragraph (d).

No. 17, in schedule, page 4, line 17, column 3, leave out paragraph (e).

No. 18, in schedule, page 4, leave out lines 20 and 21.

Mr. Banks: Subsection (3) abolishes employers' entitlement to compensation for the national insurance contributions they must pay on statutory sick pay.

Statutory sick pay was originally paid at three rates and for the first eight weeks of sickness only. In the autumn statement of 12 November 1984, the right hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson), then Chancellor of the Exchequer, announced that the SSP would, in due course, be extended to 28 weeks. At the same time, he announced that employers would be

"relieved of the burden of contributions on payments under the statutory sick pay scheme".—[*Official Report*, 12 November 1984; Vol. 67, c. 417.]

The implication was that that would compensate employers for the extra burden and cost of 20 more weeks' payment.

The Social Security Act 1985 provided for the reimbursement of the national insurance contributions on SSP, which came into effect in April 1985 and the extension of the duration of the SSP from eight to 28 weeks, which came into effect in April 1986. Employers are not reimbursed the precise amount they pay in national insurance contributions. The additional compensation is actuarially calculated to reflect the aggregate amount of secondary contributions paid on SSP and, since 1987, on statutory maternity pay. At present, the national insurance contribution compensation rate is 7 per cent. of the gross SSP paid. If it was right to give that compensation in 1985, the onus is on the Minister to explain why it is now right to take it away.

[Mr. Banks]

A number of things have been said tonight about the way in which small businesses in particular believe that the Bill is part of a "salami" approach to change. I used onions earlier, now I am using salami. Those businesses believe that the Government are working towards an undisclosed objective in a hidden agenda.

Although we might be accused of being cynical, we have some basis for it—for example, the way in which the Government sold the idea of the sale of council houses. Many objections were raised, but the idea was sold to local authorities on the basis that 100 per cent. of the money received would be used to build new accommodation. However, the percentage to be used thus was gradually reduced to 40 per cent. and, most recently, to 25 per cent. The Government advanced a number of supporting arguments to limit the opposition to the sale of council houses, and, once the opposition was out of the way, they proceeded further with their plans. We believe that that is the philosophy behind the Bill.

Since the national insurance compensation is 7 per cent. of the amount of SSP paid by the employer, abolishing it means that, with the reduction of the reimbursement rate to 80 per cent., the total burden falling on employers will be equivalent to 27 per cent. of SSP. When an employee is sick for 28 weeks and is entitled to the higher rate of SSP, the cost to the employer will be £396·90, made up by £294 for the reduction in the reimbursement rate and £102·90 for the loss of compensation for national insurance contributions. It is calculated on the basis of 28 weeks.

I feel sure that the Minister will address a subject that has been mentioned a number of times—the fact that we are talking about an average of three weeks. The National Federation of Self Employed and Small Businesses said that it was worried not about the large company suffering the average three weeks sick pay, but the small businesses with one or two employees which could suffer from someone taking the full 28 weeks' sick leave.

One is always in great danger when talking about averages. There is no such thing as the average person, who is always someone else. If the figure is 28 weeks, a small company with only one or two employees will suffer an horrendous impact. Legislation should take that into account rather than fall back on comforting talk about averages.

The objections to that proposal are precisely the same as those to the reduction of the reimbursement rate. The amendment would simply delete the whole subsection.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) made a lot of play of hidden agendas. In relation to that, and the point he made about additional compensation, I should like to reassure him about the Government's intentions.

On Second Reading, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State clearly stated that the additional compensation arrangements have been of limited success in relation to statutory sick pay. The intention of the arrangements was to compensate employers for national insurance contributions they have to pay on SSP. However, in the interests of simplicity, compensation is available on all SSP, even where the amount of sick pay payable falls below the lower earnings limit for national insurance contributions and does not attract liability for contributions in the first place. Therefore, people are receiving compensation for national insurance payments that they have not ma
unsatisfactory, and the position was fully c
Second Reading on Monday.

As my right hon. Friend made clear c
despite the relative simplicity of the calculat
extensive publicity given to it, almost 25 per
additional compensation goes unclaimed.
Department, a great deal of work is done wit
often those in small firms, on statutory sick pa
are held and there are help lines for employer
is being elaborated and extended by the new c
unit that is being set up in Newcastle. The
makes every possible effort to explain to em
the system works and, even then, about 25 pe
additional compensation is unclaimed. Given
are receiving compensation for something fo
have not paid, the scheme is unsatisfactory a
should be changed.

The hon. Member for Newham, North-We
more general remarks about the plight c
business employer, a motif that has recurred
the debates. The changes in the rates of natio
contributions that employers will pay from A
go a considerable way towards compensatin
for the measures in the Bill. Obviously, emplo
always come out ahead, because the prop
clearly depend on individual levels of pay a
However, with the proposed reductions
insurance contributions, the increased costs f
employers will be modest. That point has
number of times this afternoon.

On Monday, my right hon. Friend the
State described the effect of the changes. He

"Those changes will reduce employers' costs
million and ... are likely to be especiall
employers, often smaller employers, whose e
among the less highly paid."—[*Official Report*,
1990; Vol. 181, c. 642.]

He gave two illustrative examples, which I sh
because the hon. Member for Newham, No
present on Monday and will have heard the
will also have heard my right hon. Friend
clearly that he was giving examples whe
would gain, and there would be othe
particularly where employees earn more than
where some employers would lose. We bel
compensatory measures in the reduction
insurance contributions that will come into
will go a long way to meeting the concerns
and of the hon. Member for Newham, Nort

7.15 pm

Amendments Nos. 6 and 7 would give em
fewer than 20 employees a continuing right
compensation for SSP. As has been repeat
have acknowledged that the changes in the B
more heavily on the small business employ
why we structured the reductions in the natio
contributions as we did. By reducing th
national insurance contributions for rates
£185 by 0·4 per cent., as against a reductio
cent. for those earning above that level, we
weight the contributions reductions in respec
paid. That will mean that the savings to s
employers, who are more likely to employ t

paid, will be proportionally greater than for other employers and, in some cases, will fully match the extra costs resulting from the changes proposed in the Bill.

It would be inappropriate for me to go further, as the hon. Member for Newham, North-West wishes and give smaller business employers the continued right to additional compensation. That would cost about £18 million a year and would clearly have implications for what has been a carefully constructed package. That would be an unwelcome complication in a scheme which we have been trying to keep as simple as possible. We would have to obtain and keep up to date details of the numbers of employees in the relevant firms. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State made that point during the debate on the first group of amendments, which have a similar effect. We believe that the amendments could affect the employment patterns of employers with a work force numbering approximately that of the threshold figure. For all those reasons, I urge the Committee to reject the amendment.

Mr. Kirkwood: I am particularly grateful to the Minister for replying to amendments Nos. 6 and 7, which were originally considered to be consequential. The ministerial response provoked one or two thoughts.

I do not think that, in all conscience, the Minister can describe the measure as a carefully considered package, if for no other reason than that the timetable has been so constrained, whereas the Bill's impact will be wide-ranging. Parliamentary consideration of the Bill has taken place with unusual haste. The legislation will create difficulties for organisations seeking to represent small business employers that do not have the benefit of a sophisticated trade union structure or the Confederation of British Industry's resources and expertise. They do their best and do a good job with the professional help that they receive, but they face a mamonth task because they cover so many sectors and different businesses with employees in jobs at various levels. Therefore, given the timetable that the Government have set them to consider the Bill, it is virtually impossible for them to undertake proper consultation and make constructive suggestions on how to alter the measure.

We are all in the hands of the business managers, and the timetable is not necessarily a departmental matter entirely under Ministers' control, but will they give us an absolute assurance in the remaining few days, or indeed hours, left before the Bill goes to the other place and on to the statute book, that, if approaches are made by bona fide organisations representing small businesses, they will be given every conceivable opportunity to meet Ministers and officials, and make the points that are being fed back to them and through Members' postbags? I hope that the ministerial team will consider constructive proposals. That would go some way to reassuring us that there is no nefarious purpose behind the indecent haste with which the Bill is proceeding.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Hon. Members have spoken about the timetable. My right hon. Friend the Minister of State has said that monitoring is engraved on his heart. I assure the Committee that bona fide organisations will be welcome when they come to meet the ministerial team and officials. That is always the case, irrespective of the cause.

Mr. Tony Banks: It would have been more useful if discussions had taken place before the proposals came to us. Perhaps there were such discussions, but if that is the case why are there so many alarming noises from the National Federation of Self Employed and Small Businesses? The legislation is detailed and technical and we can see that it has not grabbed the imagination of the great majority of our colleagues.

The Minister is reasonable and emollient, but, of course, that is normal. Perhaps we should feel assured, but I have a rather nasty sinking feeling in my heart that, although she is certainly not misleading us, the implications are such that when some small businesses feel the full impact they will be even more angry than they are now. By that time it will be too late. The Minister of State said that he had "monitoring" engraved on his heart. I hope that that is for some good purpose because monitoring is important when the Committee is being asked to agree to technical proposals.

We have been assured that the Bill will not have any great implication for small businesses. I suppose that we can all repent at leisure if the Minister is wrong about that. I hope that, if monitoring reveals the difficulties that small businesses have talked about and which we have tried to amplify, there will be changes. In such areas it is perfectly correct for the Government to say that an administrative mistake might have been made.

I was disappointed by the Under-Secretary's reply, even though she put it over in a reasonable way. She said that the compensation scheme had had only limited success and that compensation had been paid on payments that had not been made by employers. She also said that 25 per cent. of additional compensation is unclaimed. That is obviously true, because the Minister said it, but the corollary is that 75 per cent. of it is claimed. Rather than scrapping the scheme because 25 per cent. of compensation is unclaimed, it would be better to get through to those who are eligible to claim and tell them that they are missing something.

The Minister was precise about the percentage of unclaimed additional compensation, but did not tell us in figures how much compensation was paid to employers who had not already made payments. As I understood it, we were being told that they were getting something for nothing. The Minister should quantify that, or we shall be left with generalities that sound all right in debate. We are not responsible for keeping the books of small companies and trying to make ends meet, and they say that they are finding that increasingly difficult.

We are disappointed that the Minister is not prepared to accept the amendment, but we shall not push it to a vote. I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Ms. Short: I beg to move amendment No. 12 in page 2, line 18, at end insert—

'(6) in section 22(3) of the Social Security Act 1989, in the definition of "relevant benefits", at the end there shall be inserted the words "but, in the case of statutory sick pay, only such proportion of any payment as is recoverable by virtue of section 9(1)(a) of the Social Security and Housing Benefits Act 1982".'.

The amendment seeks to prevent the DSS from recovering the whole of the statutory sick pay from compensation for personal injury when only 80 per cent. of statutory sick pay will be reimbursed when the Bill becomes law. Section 22 of the Social Security Act 1989 provides for the recovery of benefits paid as a result of personal injury by deduction from any compensation

[Ms. Short]

payments. We debated that issue at great length in 1989 when the Social Security Bill was going through. We felt passionately that it was wrong to reclaim compensation that might have been paid, for example, for pain and suffering in order to reimburse the DSS. That is not the issue contained in the amendment and, therefore, the matter is narrower.

The amount recoverable under the 1989 Act is the "gross amount of any relevant benefits paid or likely to be paid to or for the victim during the relevant period". Section 22 leaves the relevant benefits to be defined by regulations, and the Social Security (Recoupment) Regulations 1990 list a wide range of benefits, including some which have little or no connection with personal injury, for example, family credit and unemployment benefit.

The new disability living allowance and disability working allowance may be added to the list in due course. Perhaps the Minister will tell us about that. The list already includes statutory sick pay. Presumably the justification is that although statutory sick pay is paid by employers, they are reimbursed by the DSS. However, in future the reimbursement will be only partial—80 per cent. in 1991-92. It cannot be right for the DSS to recover benefit that it has not paid. That is the point of the amendment, which proposes that only the amount actually reimbursed by the DSS should be recoverable from any compensation payment.

If the long title of the Bill had allowed, we would have tabled an amendment removing statutory sick pay from the list of benefits recoverable under the 1989 Act. The treatment of sick pay for these purposes is chaotic, different parts of sick pay being treated in different ways. However, the long title is tightly drawn and it was not possible to amend it.

We seek to ensure that a minor injustice is put right. It would surely be wrong if the DSS were allowed to claim back 100 per cent. of statutory sick pay when people receive compensation as a result of an accident, even though the DSS had been responsible for only 80 per cent. of that sick pay. I hope that the Minister will concede the point.

Mr. Scott: As the hon. Member for Ladywood said, the amendment seeks to change the amount of statutory sick pay recoverable under the compensation recovery scheme which we discussed at great length during the passage of the Social Security Act 1989. At present, the scheme provides for an amount equivalent to the sum of statutory sick pay paid to be recovered from any compensation payment. As we know, the Bill proposes to reduce Government funding of SSP from 100 to 80 per cent. I listened with great care and attention to the hon. Lady, but I do not think that an amendment on the face of the Bill is the correct vehicle for introducing any change that might be required.

Section 22(3) of the Social Security Act 1989 refers to benefits in broad terms and provides that individual benefits covered by the scheme should be prescribed in regulations. The list of benefits is contained in the Social Security (Recoupment) Regulations 1990. For the sake of consistency, therefore, we wish to pursue that line and see whether an amendment to regulations is required. I am advised that there is no need to take any primary powers additional to those contained in clause 2 of will therefore undertake to consider implications of the changes, paying close att hon. Lady's comments.

I hope that the Committee will accept this our intention to look at the matter with urgency, care and sympathy. In the li undertaking, I hope that the hon. Lady will amendment.

Ms. Short: This is getting better as the n On the basis of that undertaking, I beg to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 1 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 2 and 3 ordered to stand part of t

Schedule agreed to.

Bill to be reported, without amendment.

Order for Third Reading read.—[Queen'

behalf of the Crown, signified.]

7.30 pm

Mr. Tony Newton: I beg to move, That th read the Third time.

In the interests of the time of the Hous understanding that if the hon. Member for (Mr. Meacher) says anything to which I s respond I shall have the leave of the Hou confine myself to commending the Bill to th

7.31 pm

Mr. Meacher: That was the shortest spee ing the Third Reading of a Bill that I have he time. I do not know whether it is in anticipati of words from me or because the Secretary find so little to commend in the Bill.

The Opposition are clear about the Bil soothing and emollient atmosphere that de went rather rapidly through the Com problems remain. There is a good argumen small group of activists going through the n Bill because they do so with a precision understanding that is often helpful. Howe reason not to return to my initial judgment mean and nasty little Bill, the sole purpose make one group—the sick and disabled wo those concessions in social security po Government have been forced to make so public opinion.

After freezing child benefit for thre Government were forced this year to m uprating for the first child and, as evicti residents from private residential and n increased, the Government were forced to increases in income support, although nothi to eliminate the shortfall.

It is now clear where the money to enforced concessions is to come fro employers' recovery of statutory sick pay f per cent. will save £80 million in 1991-92, million in 1992-93, although that is of employers by a compensatory reduction national insurance contribution. On top of the package, freezing the higher rate of stat and raising the threshold above which it is £100 million in 1991-92.

In effect, the Bill makes one poor group pay for the increase in benefits to another. Apart from the Treasury, no one gains from it. It is also a Bill that is uniquely without friends. I cannot recall any recent Bill with the same distinction. The CBI, the National Federation of Self Employed and Small Businesses, the TUC, the trade unions and the voluntary sector do not have a good word to say about it.

No doubt it is a coincidence that the remaining stages of the Bill are going through the House on the first day of the new premiership. Whether the new Prime Minister is son of Thatcher—something that is disputed, although the Opposition have a clear view of it—we can say that this package is son of Thatcher. It is mean in its dealings with the low-paid and sick, particularly women. It is a further whittling away of workers' basic sick pay rights, which even employers agree—the National Federation of Self Employed and Small Businesses argues this—should be undertaken by national insurance. I never thought that I should see the day when smaller employers would argue the case for the welfare state and national insurance. The Bill is being forced on employers and employees alike without consultation, as several Tory Members have pointed out.

The Bill has been rushed through to prevent small employers' organisations from mounting the kind of intensive lobbying that stopped the Government in their tracks 10 years ago. I cannot think of a recent example of a Bill that has had Second Reading on a Monday and its remaining stages two days later. No emergency or external conditions require this haste. It is simply to serve the Government's convenience and to block off the opposition that they know exists. Furthermore, by doing this, the Government have reneged on promises and commitments given by the previous Secretary of State in 1981 when the Government clearly accepted that they should stick to 100 per cent. compensation.

The only rationale that the Secretary of State has been able to offer for this wretched little measure is the alleged spread of occupational sick pay schemes. The survey on which this supposed finding is based has been scoured to elicit the statistic that 91 per cent. of the work force is employed by companies with occupational sick pay schemes. Therefore, cuts in statutory sick pay by adjusting both thresholds and levels of benefit could be justified. It is on that that the Bill depends, and it is closely linked to that figure of 91 per cent.

If the right hon. Gentleman does not yet have the message, I point out again that that 91 per cent. figure has been comprehensively discredited in even these brief proceedings, both on Second Reading and today. The survey showed that 44 per cent. of private sector employers did not offer any form of occupational sick pay and, worse than that, more than half of all firms with fewer than 10 employees have no occupational sick pay provision. With those facts, the rationale behind the Bill collapses. We have had no answer to that point, and that is a critical and decisive judgment of the Bill.

The losers under this Bill and this package—I must remember that I should use this wider word, although on Third Reading we keep more closely to the detail of the Bill—are the 3 million employees with earnings of between £125 and £185 a week who will no longer be eligible for the higher rate of statutory sick pay. About one fifth of them —more than 500,000—are expected to claim statutory sick pay every year, and they will lose on average £9 a week, and the majority of them are women.

The disabled will also lose, as will those with chronic ill health, and those who have poor health prospects. The last mentioned is a wide group and includes many older workers, all of whom are having an employment warning pinned on them by the Bill. If the Bill is passed, employers everywhere, but I suspect particularly smaller employers, will have a strong financial incentive to be wary of recruiting anyone who has a health risk. The answers given by the Under-Secretary on this critical point of the Bill were thin and unconvincing. That is an important effect of which we have had no explanation.

Small employers are also losers. We are told that 19 out of 20 businesses employ fewer than 20 people. There are many small employers in Britain now. Many of them will be significantly out of pocket as a result of the Bill when, at a time of accelerating recession, they can ill afford it. The federation made that point clearly. The losers will be those penalised with costs of up to £200 which they can ill afford and which may well entail a significant rise in unemployment. All are losers; there are no winners except the Treasury.

For all those reasons, we strongly repudiate the Bill. It is based on a selective and grossly misleading interpretation of the evidence that is used to justify it. It creates only losers. It is unanimously rejected by all the relevant parties outside the House. It has been introduced without consultation and it is being propelled through the House—I think that all hon. Members will agree—with unseemly haste. I submit that that is to preclude an offensive, similar to that in 1979-80 when the Government were derailed, being mounted against it. The Bill will undoubtedly pin on hundreds of thousands of chronically sick and disabled people the sign "Employment risk—you have been warned" when they are seeking recruitment in the labour market.

Few Bills have less to be said for them than this one. On those extensive and convincing grounds, we shall strongly and unequivocally repudiate the Bill in the Lobby tonight.

7.41 pm

Mr. Kirkwood: I shall concentrate on how the Bill affects employers, particularly small employers, but, in doing so, I do not want in any way to diminish the important points made by the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) about its effect on employees, because they are well worth considering.

The Government do not fully appreciate the Bill's impact on businesses throughout Britain. My small rural constituency has thousands of small businesses, all part of the Border economy in south-east Scotland, and the Bill will have a profound impact on their future ability to prosper. The Government have not considered the Bill's full implications and ramifications. If they had consulted the kind of businesses that we have in my constituency they would have come to a different conclusion. I have no doubt that the Bill will be deeply inimical to business interests.

The Secretary of State was at pains to say that only the Labour party takes billions of pounds out of the pockets of business. To a certain extent I agree, but in the fulness of time the Bill will result in a top-line saving of about £250 million. Not too many years have to pass before £250

[Mr. Kirkwood]

million amounts to billions being taken from the pockets of British business, so the right hon. Gentleman is not in such a strong position as he might think.

The Government's defence for proceeding with such speed cannot be believed. People outside will not believe that the Bill has been brought forward in this way for the convenience of small and big businesses which would have found it difficult to make the necessary administrative changes if the Government had waited until after Christmas. It is a bit like sentencing an accused before the case for the defence has been properly heard.

The federation and, to a lesser extent, the CBI, feel that they have not had a proper hearing. Consultation has been inadequate. The Bill is being hung round their necks without a proper consideration of its implications. They tell me, and I have every sympathy with them, that, had more time been available for discussions with the Secretary of State and others in the Department, they might have been able to prevail upon them to mitigate the damage or even to prevent it.

In recent years, the courts have had great difficulty in interpreting social security legislation that has been rushed through the House and the full weight of the appeal procedure has had to be brought into play to remedy the defects in statutes that have not been properly considered. By any objective test, this Bill has been pushed through too fast for its own good, as well as for the good of those whom it will affect.

It is still, at this late stage, open to the Secretary of State to say that he will not push through the remaining stages in another place. If he were to say that he would hasten more slowly, the consultation process could proceed and even at the eleventh hour that would be beneficial.

The Department's package to help small business men become familiar with the Bill adds to the confusion. The 50 per cent. reduction in the rebate is another complication adding to the burdens on small businesses.

Some years ago the Government made great play of the fact that they were reducing the burdens on businesses. They produced glossy publications to show that they were aware of the problems and were doing something about them. Their rhetoric will ring hollow tonight if the Bill receives its Third Reading.

The compliance costs have been largely underestimated by the Government. As the hon. Member for Oldham, West said, nobody is in favour of the Bill, because there is nothing to be said in its favour. The Bill is unfair, damaging and unnecessary. It is a deliberate and calculated move which will damage British business interests. The Secretary of State will never be able to allay that charge and I hope that it comes back time and again to haunt him. If it does, it will be entirely justified.

7.48 pm

Mr. Battle: When the House debated the introduction of the "next steps" agencies by the Treasury, the Secretary of State for Social Security was keen to distance himself from any idea that the method of providing social security would be privatised in any way. The Bill might not privatise the method, but it is a classic case of the privatisation of the provision of social security.

This measure is another example of enforced privatisation, pushing responsibility for statutory sick pay on to the employer. The Government are away from returning to the House to arg longer necessary because it merely du provision. That argument has been made debated pensions and the shift away from that the Government will be back to redu reimbursement still further.

The very nature of SSP is being chan benefit to a mixture of state and employ hon. Members on both sides of the Cham out, ultimately low-paid workers will pay Bill. The Social Security Advisory Comm that SSP is intended to replace lost earni an income maintenance function for thos through sickness. That should be a basi welfare state, provided by the taxatio insurance system.

It will be interesting to see whether it there will be talk of collective responsi have endured 10 years in which words suc "common provision", "public", "societ have become pejorative terms and been b political vocabulary. It will be interes whether the Government will start to collective responsibility. We say that collective responsibility for providing maintenance system for all workers, re level of pay and the nature of their wor

Far from SSP being an important an income for low-paid workers who, thr their own, are unable to work, un Government those benefits will be wi chipped away at until they provide only of third party, fire and theft coverage—ra of a comprehensive actuarial plan.

The Government claim that cover is the private sector, but I invite the Secr examine who will be affected by exclusion and rates of pay. Guess who is exclu part-time workers and manual grades rec

West Yorkshire traditionally has the l in the whole of the British Isles. They a with those in Northern Ireland. Leeds h and small-sized firms. It does not have o such as coal and steel, nor is its employ one large company. Instead, Leeds owes a myriad of small and medium-sized firm do not pay high wages. We have see employment to unemployment—and, m shift from comparatively secure wo temporary and low-paid work, particula

We are seeing a further shift to m Government call it targeting, but it structural step away from universal bene many of them left. Child benefit has alrea death, and we now have another quiet security budget to save the Treasury mon passed over to employers.

I am not convinced by the Governmen the disabled will not be penalised and th possibly contribute to positive discri disabled and long-term sick people. O people will again be axed from benefit can be given to another. We have seen th with housing benefit.

It is clear that the Bill is being squeezed through the House during an interregnum for the change of Tory leadership. We are told that the Government are changing their policies, but the Bill proves that they are not pulling back from a Thatcherist approach. The Bill demonstrates that Thatcherism remains intact and is on course. It is a further step in the Government's plans for privatisation and for making the poorest pay.

7.54 pm

Mr. Flynn: My hon. Friend referred to the interregnum, black hole or news vacuum in which we find ourselves at this moment. New benefits—and there are some—are being introduced by the Government with a great fanfare of trumpets and trombones, while they make cuts elsewhere.

I will be generous to the Secretary of State because he has been re-employed in his old job. The kindest interpretation that we can place on the right hon. Gentleman's actions is that he does not understand the basis of the report on which the Bill is founded. The Secretary of State laughs. I will not draw any conclusions from that, because I refuse to be sidetracked. Nevertheless, the right hon. Gentleman has tonight admitted his unabashed admiration for some of his own extempore words during the Second Reading debate. He quoted them with some satisfaction. However, he may find some of his other statements less admirable on reflection.

When we hit on the great misconception behind the Bill, and when we question the figure of 91 per cent., relating to the number of employers offering sick pay schemes, the Secretary of State said:

"Under some schemes, some new employees may have to serve a qualification period before becoming eligible for occupational sick pay. A typical qualifying period for short-term sickness cover is three months. However, it is worth remembering that half all private-sector schemes . . . have no exclusion clauses at all."

The original IFF survey qualifies that argument:

"However, those schemes which are more likely to have exclusion clauses are the larger private establishments, (72 per cent.) and public sector organisations (67 per cent.). Thus, almost three quarters (72 per cent.) of employees working in establishments offering short-term cover are potentially affected by eligibility factors. Schemes in the finance business services sector are least likely to have any exclusion clauses."

Occupational schemes do exist, but many are far from adequate.

On Second Reading, the Secretary of State said also: "where there is a qualifying period, it would typically be about three months—perhaps, in some cases, six months".

He gave the impression that three months is the norm, but that in some instances a six-month term might apply. However, the IFF report states:

"The factor which most frequently affects employees' entitlement to short-term sick pay is length of time with the company. The qualifying period is typically between 3-12 months. It is the larger employers . . . who are more likely to have this exemption clause. As a result, about half (50 per cent.) of the work force is potentially affected."

The Secretary of State was wrong, because a typical exclusion is not three months but between three and 12 months.

Arguing that the qualifying period should be compared with state sickness benefit, the Secretary of State said: "where there is a qualifying period, it would typically be about three months—perhaps, in some cases six months—which is substantially less than the qualifying period for state sickness benefit."—[*Official Report*, 26 November 1990; Vol. 181, c. 633-34.]

That comparison is totally meaningless. State sickness benefit entitlement does not depend on length of service with a particular employer.

From day one of their employment, everyone is qualified, provided that they have enough national insurance contributions credited to them in the past two years and regardless of whether they have been working for that employer or not. A more relevant comparison would be with statutory sick pay, which is payable from day one of the period of employment, with no contribution conditions.

Those misunderstandings by the Secretary of State strike at the root of the Bill and the justification for it. I was recently speaking to a total stranger who happened to read the deliberations of the meetings of the Standing Committee that considered the Social Security Bill last year. He identified me by a label I was wearing—as we often do. He told me that he had read the proceedings on the Social Security Bill and—as a student of history—he thought that it was similar to an account of what had happened in the Reichstag in the 1930s. The Opposition are constantly attacking Bills, in good faith. We undermine the rationale of the Government's case, but we do not get a reply. We merely have the Government's steamroller, bulldozing through legislation, using the muscle of their majority.

Social security legislation has followed two main trends in the past decade. That is the way that people see it. Year after year we have been copying the Americans and repeating the mistakes made by the Reagan regime. The result of all the myths that fed the Reagan mythology is that 3 million homeless people are now on the streets of America—the people whom Bush has described as "America's shame". Visitors to the most prosperous cities in the United States see—side by side with obscene riches—groups of people, many of whom are mentally ill, camping out. We are progressing blindly and stupidly in that direction year after year.

The second trend is a return to the last century. We are being compelled in that direction by the falsely named No Turning Back group. Much of what has been argued in the debate would take us back to the era before 1911, when the social welfare programme started in this country for very good reasons. Perhaps we should return to the justification for our social welfare programme, which has been built up over that long period of time. We are gradually tearing it down and turning back to a cruel and unfair past.

The Bill will re-establish all the uncertainty and anxiety of sickness, made worse by the knowledge that one does not have a secure income. The Bill is mean, malicious and ill-conceived, and it hits most strongly at the people who have been short-changed by life—those who have been cheated by disability or who are daily under-rewarded with low pay. The Bill is a disgrace.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Will the Secretary of State make it clear that he has signified the Queen's Consent?

8.4 pm

Mr. Newton: I am glad to confirm that I have signified giving the Queen's Consent—*[Interruption.]* If the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) wants an explanation of the Queen's Consent, I invite the Chair

[Mr. Newton]

to give it because I cannot remember it. I know that it is not lese-majesté, and that I have to do it, and I think that I have satisfied the Table that I have done so.

I am glad that I am not the speech writer for the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) but I am even more glad that I am not the speech writer for the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn). After I had listened to the former, I thought that it would be impossible to incorporate any more exaggeration, hyperbole and general overstatement into a speech, but then I heard the hon. Member for Newport, West, who took the biscuit.

In the interests of brevity I shall not seek to answer all the nonsense trotted out in the past few minutes. I merely observe that it is mildly ironic that—in view of the new-found European enthusiasm sometimes to be found on the Opposition Benches—on a number of occasions Opposition Members urge us to go in the direction of the more generous provisions of this kind in Europe. The remarks of the hon. Member for Newport, West about returning to the 19th century should be considered against the background that Denmark is the only European country that provides a cash benefit for sickness which is solely funded by the state, and that, of the other 11 EC countries, six provide no state subsidy and in most countries, the major payment comes from the employer.

The Low Pay Unit report, which I suspect is the source of much of the stuff that we have heard in the House in the past few days, quotes Luxembourg where employees get 100 per cent. of earnings for a year when they are sick. That is fine. Compare that rhetoric which has been used in the debate. One discovers that that benefit is paid entirely by the employer. The only state involvement is 50 per cent. of the administration costs.

Mr. Allen McKay: I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman does not wish to mislead the House. When he quotes information like that, he should also take into consideration the employees' work contracts and the salaries that they receive to make up for it.

Mr. Newton: I am also taking employers' rights here into consideration, as well as the fact that a large part of the work force is covered not only by the sort of arrangements that we are talking about tonight, but by occupational sick pay schemes.

I am not going to return to that argument. I merely point out that anyone who reads the IFF report and its clear-cut conclusions about the growth in coverage of occupational sick pay schemes, would have grave reservations about some of the remarks made in the debate. I shall not return to that subject because it is largely irrelevant to the Bill, which—as is common consent between the Front Benches—does not affect the rights of any employee. No-one's entitlement to statutory sick pay will be affected by the Bill. All that will be affected is the way in which statutory sick pay is funded, and the balance between funding it by the state and by the employer—it is a change in balance.

That change, which amounts to about £250 million, is accompanied by reductions in employer national insurance contributions of broadly the same amount. Although that is not in the Bill, it is clearly associated with the argument for it. In that context, against the background of those figures, and the fact that no employees' rights are affected by the Bill, I reject many of the arguments put to me in the past few minutes out of hand. I reject the accusations made, and I commend the Third Reading of the Bill to the House.

Question put, That the Bill be now read the Third time:—

The House divided: Ayes 156, Noes 114.

Division No. 14] **[8.07 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Burns, Simon
Butcher, John
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Curry, David
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Dunn, Bob
Eggar, Tim
Evennett, David
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hind, Kenneth
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Madel, David
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Neale, Gerrard
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rhodes James, Robert
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Sir Wyn *(Conwy)*
Sackville, Hon Tom
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*

Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Stevens, Lewis
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Tracey, Richard
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Wheeler, Sir John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Irvine Patnick and
Mr. Timothy Kirkhope.

NOES

Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Beith, A. J.
Bellotti, David
Benton, Joseph
Bermingham, Gerald
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dixon, Don
Doran, Frank
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Galloway, George
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Hardy, Peter
Heal, Mrs Sylvia
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kilfedder, James
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McWilliam, John
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Morley, Elliot
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
O'Brien, William
O'Hara, Edward
Pike, Peter L.
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Redmond, Martin
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terence
Ruddock, Joan
Sheerman, Barry
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Taylor, Rt Hon J. D. *(S'ford)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Wallace, James
Wareing, Robert N.
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. John Battle.

Question accordingly agreed to.
Bill read the Third time, and passed.

Development Board for Rural Wales Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

8.19 pm

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. David Hunt): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

The purpose of the Bill, as effected by clause 1, is to increase the statutory financial limit for the Development Board for Rural Wales from the present level of £100 million to £175 million. It may assist the House if I explain the background to the limit.

The Development of Rural Wales Act 1976 set a limit of £25 million, which was raised to £40 million in 1980 and further increased to its current level of £100 million by the Industry Act 1981. At the end of the current financial year, expenditure counting against the financial limit will be some £90 million. Present forecasts suggest, therefore, that the limit will be reached during the 1991-92 financial year. It is therefore necessary to raise it now so as not to inhibit the development board's contribution to the redevelopment of that region in Wales for which it is responsible.

The development board's key objective is the expansion and diversification of the economy of mid-Wales. Its area covers the district of Ceredigion in Dyfed, Meirionnydd in Gwynedd and all three districts of Powys, Montgomeryshire, Radnorshire and Brecon. The area covers some 40 per cent. of Wales. About 8 per cent. of the Welsh population reside in it and, according to the mid-year estimates, since 1981 the number has risen from 203,100 to the 1988 level of 213,500.

There is little doubt that a winning pace has been set for the economic and social development of mid-Wales. During 1989-90, more than 260,000 sq ft of factory space was allocated, some 50 per cent. of which was taken by businesses already established in mid-Wales. Those projects are expected to create more than 1,000 jobs in the next three years. During 1989-90, just under 140,000 sq ft of factory space was built, and a further 165,000 sq ft is being built under the 1990-91 programme.

Despite the slowdown in the economy, factory allocations in mid-Wales have shown an increase on the first six months of last year. About 57 units, representing 182,074 sq ft of factory space, have been allocated from April to September this year, which compares more than favourably with 49 units totalling 154,624 sq ft in 1989. Those allocations are expected to create 680 jobs in the next three years.

The chairman of the development board, Mr. Glyn Davies, said at the presentation of the half-yearly report in October:

> "There is still encouraging growth in the region, with many companies forging ahead with expansion plans, supported by the Development Board's attractive grants and loans."

I understand that inquiries for factories are significantly higher than last year.

The development board holds some 473 factories—1·9 million sq ft—and has sold a further 96—1·3 million sq ft. They provide more than 8,500 jobs, in the main for the indigenous population of mid-Wales. About 40 per cent. of the development board's stock has already been sold to the private sector and by 1993-94 it is expected that 47 per cent. of the floor space will have been sold.

The board's activity is focused on encouraging and strengthening the private sector within its area. Its economic strategy is contingent on a thriving private

[Mr. David Hunt]

sector, creating jobs and prosperity. With that in mind, I have taken a particular interest in the launch of the board's recent policy document, "Strategy for the 90s," which contains details of its investment plans for the next three years and its increased commitment to the more remote western half of its area. We can have no doubt about the success of its policy on the eastern side, an area which enjoys a fair degree of prosperity and low unemployment. The Government's approach is to consolidate recent success by helping to build better businesses and to help ensure a better life style for all in the board's area. The result will be a significantly stronger and more diversified economy.

It is appropriate to mention how important it is for there to be continued close co-operation between the board, the Welsh Development Agency, the Welsh tourist board and, of course, local authorities and all public bodies. The development board is particularly keen to build on its achievement and I applaud that approach.

Hon. Members will be aware that there are two major economic challenges in rural areas: first, rural decline and the exodus of population from rural to urban areas; and, secondly, the difficulty of sustaining communities in the most vulnerable areas. Unless rural Wales can achieve a viable economic base, outward migration of young people will continue. I believe that we are making good progress on that front.

In 1972, on the night of the creation, the development board area had a population of 185,000. The 1988 mid-year estimates show that the population in the area is now 213,000, which is an increase of 15·2 per cent. That increase coincides with the development of the board's policies since its creation in 1977. However, the Minister of State and I are well aware of the continuing difficulties with the loss of young people from the area, continuing depopulation of the most remote rural areas and the challenge of a worsening age structure, with high dependency ratios and a relatively high proportion of people of pensionable age. Without continued net inward migration, the population of mid-Wales would not be able to replace itself.

Our policies help to create an environment in which young people can find new jobs in manufacturing industry, tourism and the service industries, providing a much greater diversity of employment opportunities. Such achievements help the creation of a much-improved quality of life for local people as well as attracting inward investment. All that helps to create a new confidence in the region.

There is little doubt that entrepreneurship has been cultivated and is beginning to flourish in rural Wales.

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): The Secretary of State seems to have moved from the challenges facing the Government in rural mid-Wales without referring to the difficulties being experienced in agriculture, which have become more pronounced since the development board considered its strategy for the 1990s. What new account will be taken of those agriculture difficulties, and will the Secretary of State refer to them in his speech?

Mr. Hunt: I certainly will. I assure the hon. Gentleman that agriculture as an industry is vital for the whole of Wales. However, that is not part of the work of the Development Board for Rural Wales; it is very much concern of the Welsh Office and its Agricult Department. It is part of an overall picture. There must a continuing welding together of policies in this import area if we are to ensure the continued revival of the r areas of Wales. I agree with the hon. Gentleman in t respect.

There is little doubt that entrepreneurship has b cultivated and is beginning to flourish in rural Wales. I pleased that last year nearly 700 people took part in development board's "Getting into Business" cou operated through the network of seven local busi centres. Some 5,300 inquiries were handled, 2,000 of wh were from new clients. It is estimated that about 400 businesses were formed in 1989-90.

It was just over a year ago that the development bo launched its western initiative with the determinatio ensure that the prosperity, employment and busi confidence seen so clearly on its eastern side should spread to the more rural areas on its western side.

Mr. Christopher Gill (Ludlow): My right hon. Fri mentioned the board's success in improving circumsta in the eastern part of Wales. Does he concede that som the problems which he described as coming within responsibility exist in parts of England adjoining Wa The effect of the assistance that he can give to enterpr in Wales can impinge, sometimes seriously, on enterpr in England which do not have access to the same fu Perhaps my right hon. Friend can give some comfor that point.

Mr. Hunt: I wish that I could give my hon. Fri comfort, but this is a matter not for me but for my r hon. Friends in England. Tonight we are addressing problems of rural Wales, not those of Ludlow and o adjoining parts of England. My hon. Friend's point matter for another occasion, but I recognise that he had an opportunity to draw attention to the import always of looking at the overall impact of policies suc those that we are purusing in Wales and their impac adjoining areas of England. I sympathise with my Friend, but I hope that he will understand if I ca answer his point.

The development board therefore diverted som million of its existing resources to its areas on the wes edge of Brecknock, Radnorshire and Montgomeryshir well as the whole of Meirionnydd and Ceredigion. initiative has many strands including the allocatio more staff by the development board, the creation of r business premises, enhanced promotional marketing o areas, and the intensification of the business start-up business growth programmes, including the opening satellite office in Machynlleth staffed by Welsh spea and offering business advice.

I am encouraged by the progress which has alr been made and we need now to consolidate and buil this impressive start. The development board has prep a special rural action programme which will enable work of the western initiative to be carried forward increased factory construction and economic and support measures. I have been convinced by the quali the case put forward by the chairman and members o development board and have, therefore, in addition £400,000 increase in baseline provision, agreed tha extra £1 million will be available in 1991-92 for the sp

rural action programme. The budget contribution from the Welsh Office to the board will now rise from £12·7 million to £14·1 million—an 11 per cent. increase in its budget.

Dr. Dafydd Elis Thomas (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for making that announcement at the start of the debate. Will he confirm that this is new and additional funding to the board and that it is not a recycling of promises made earlier?

Mr. Hunt: I always have difficulty when I am asked about recycling of promises made earlier because I have been Secretary of State for Wales for only six months. So far as I am concerned, this is extra money for these plans next year over this year and I hope that it will give an extra boost to the special rural action programme.

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): Will the right hon. Gentleman give us a breakdown some time tonight as to where the money will go and how much of it is new money?

Mr. Hunt: As I explained, there will be an increase in the total resources for the Development Board for Rural Wales from £12·7 million to £14·1 million—an 11 per cent. increase. I believe that that will be more than enough to cope with the board's objectives. I have identified one aspect—the special rural action programme—but I should be happy to give the hon. Gentleman any further facts and statistics later.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): The Minister made it clear that he was not responsible for the actions of his predecessor. Will he reflect on the unfortunate acronym for the rural action programme, where he is inviting people to take the RAP? Will he give us some guarantee that these action programmes are in line with modern thinking and that they will be environmentally friendly? It is important that any new agriculture programmes are benign towards the environment.

Mr. Hunt: I have two points to make in answer to the hon. Gentleman. First, I take full responsibility for the actions of my predecessors—although not those going back beyond 1979—and I am not seeking to avoid responsibility. I was merely being a little cautious in response to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas), which I think was justified in the light of experience. I was extra-cautious so that I did not miss some comment that might have been made before I became Secretary of State for Wales.

Secondly, on RAP, of course I shall bring the hon. Gentleman's remarks to the attention of those who administer the programme. It is important that we relate such programmes to modern-day circumstances and requirements.

I confirm that I shall take a close and great interest in the development board's package of measures designed to help the western part of the region. I am certainly confident that, in using this "fine brush" technique, the development board will be able to achieve greater success.

The board's primary objective is the creation of a self-sustaining economy and this is being achieved by providing an ever-widening manufacturing base to create high-quality jobs which can complement the quality of life in terms of culture, language and the scenic beauty of mid-Wales.

I should like to return to the comments by the hon. Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths) about agriculture. Yesterday, I was with several hon. Members who attended the Royal Agricultural Society's winter fair. I had the opportunity to say some words about agriculture. I reaffirm how vital is the provision of a healthy agricultural economy in Wales. It underpins the economic, social and environmental structure of Wales.

I think that you would be quick to point out, Madam Deputy Speaker, that we are dealing with the Development Board for Rural Wales, not with agricultural policy; but, in so far as you allow hon. Members to raise points relating to agriculture, I shall—with the leave of the House—try to respond to them at the end of the debate.

I urge the House to support the Bill, so that the development board can continue its fine work and achieve the objectives that the Government have set it.

8.39 pm

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): I welcome the extra £1 million. It can, I think, be defined as new money; we shall hear confirmation of its newness later if the Secretary of State catches your eye, Madam Deputy Speaker, and perhaps also learn for what purposes it will be earmarked.

I agree with the right hon. Gentleman's identification of the major problems—not least rural decline, the exodus and the difficulty of sustaining communities. The former chairman, Mr. Leslie Morgan, did some very good work, and I think that rural Wales will also miss the work of Dr. Iain Skewis, whom I knew for many years. I understand that the new chairman is making himself very accessible, and trying to be helpful to Members. Much good work has been done and is still being done, and we shall continue to support and encourage the board in the same way as the right hon. Gentleman.

I remind the House that it was a Labour Government who enacted the legislation to set up the board——

Mr. Donald Coleman (Neath): Will my hon. Friend also remind the Secretary of State that, had it not been for the work of his predecessors before 1979, he would not be at the Dispatch Box this evening, announcing the granting of this welcome new money?

Mr. Jones: My hon. Friend has a long memory; he is also a skilled parliamentarian. He knows that, when the Bill to set up the Development Board for Rural Wales was in Committee, the attitude of the then Opposition—the right hon. Gentleman's party—was less than encouraging, and the stance and style of the then hon. Member for Pembroke—now Lord Crickhowell—less than welcoming. Perhaps it was the effect of the hot summer; he was occasionally choleric.

From my perusal of *Hansard*, I note that members of the Committee included the hon. Members for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Howells) and for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas). Time has passed: some of the others have retired, some have died and some have been ennobled. It was my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Aberavon (Mr. Morris), however, who conceived the measure and pushed it through. Perhaps his inspiration was the great Mr. Jim Griffiths.

Dr. Dafydd Elis Thomas (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): I recollect that the board was conceived in Llandyssul by Viscount Tonypandy, at a particularly difficult time—the time of the 1970 general election.

Mr. Jones: The identification of my former right hon. Friend Viscount Tonypandy with the conception of legislation is indeed apposite. I remember the welcome that the hon. Gentleman gave the measure: he used the word "unique".

The Bill concerns such towns as Blaenau Ffestiniog, Newtown, Welshpool, Llandidrod Wells, Builth Wells, Brecon, Rhyader, Aberystwyth, Penrhyndeudraeth, Llanfyllin, Hay, Crickhowell and Ystradgynlais. These are small, isolated and beautiful towns, and their citizens, whose quality and standard of living we are now to debate, are some of the finest citizens in the British Isles. All is not well; the position is not exactly as the Secretary of State described it. Given the present rate of increase—on which I agree with the right hon. Gentleman—the £100 million limit will probably be reached in 1991-92. More money is therefore needed if the current plans for the funding of the board next year are to proceed: that is why we are here, and why we want to give a fair wind to the Bill.

An increase in the financial limit, however, will not of itself provide any guide to the future level of expenditure or Government funding. I hope that the Secretary of State does speak later, so that we may hear about the various headings under which he intends the new money to be spent.

Page 23 of the annual report draws attention to continued high interest rates, and to the uncertainty of national economic indicators. Page 24 emphasises that the availability of more land that can be developed to meet future needs is an urgent priority; from my reading of the report, I judge that there is a problem there. It also refers to an acute housing shortage in the area of the board's jurisdiction. Another sobering passage refers to the effects of a tightening economy and to business failures. I feel that I should stress that, given that the Secretary of State chose to present the position in the best possible light—as he is, of course, entitled to do. I hope that the Government can assist the board by meeting these difficult challenges.

Rural Wales needs to hold on to its young people. It needs more, and lasting, job opportunities; it needs stronger and more diverse businesses; it needs a better transport infrastructure; and it demonstrably needs more help from the Government. It needs much more support and much more leadership. I hope that the Bill will mean positive change.

The new money relates to the board's priorities, which should be emphasised again and again. We need to target manufacturing industry—the board refers to "focus development". It also mentions the creation, or maintenance of 1,500 jobs a year. I welcome the news of the new Machynlleth office and the co-operation that has taken place with other bodies; I also welcome the special action in the west. Those are laudable objectives and I think that the Bill will help to achieve them.

I hope that ministerial financial backing will improve communications in Wales. I see Powys as the bridge between north and south Wales; without a shadow of a doubt, there is a pressing need for improved road links between north and south. The journey time is appalling, as the Secretary of State has found out, and he may agr the quality of the roads between the two communities is also unacceptable.

I think that the north-south link militates bringing the two Wales together. Better road links mean better social, cultural and economic links. A link would help to unify Wales and we want mor there. The country faces many challenges, not leas of 1992, the channel tunnel, the bewildering cha eastern Europe and the many changes presaged Common Market.

We need to end the near permanent division of caused by poor communications. A better road wou to more unity. As the end of the century draws ne after the receipt of £87 billion worth of North revenue, we still have not improved the communi between north and south Wales. That is not good e The Secretary of State should devise a strategy as possible.

I also hope that the Bill will help the many lo workers in rural Wales. Rural Wales has a lo problem every bit as bad as that in the industrialise and north of Wales. Powys is the heart of rural Wa I am sorry to tell the House that it has the proportion of very low paid manual workers in Wal House will not like the statistics that I have obtaine the Library's research division. They show that the gross normal weekly earnings of workers in Pow £220, compared with a Welsh average of £258 national average of £295. The Library statistics sh the average for Powys was the lowest among the counties.

Mr. Richard Livsey (Brecon and Radnor): Is it that over the past five years the Welsh Office stati have been unable to publish the figures and t Gentleman had to go to the Library to get them to the low wages in Powys?

Mr. Jones: I warmly agree with the hon. Gentle far as these matters are concerned, the extreme mo the Welsh Office is curiouser and curiouser. In Apr 36 per cent. of male employees in Powys earned und a week compared to 26 per cent. in Wales and 19 p in Great Britain as a whole. The situation is eve than that. Only 12 per cent. of male employees in earned more than £320 compared to 22 per cent. fo as a whole and 31 per cent. in Great Britain. The Powys was the lowest among the Welsh counties.

Among full-time male employees reporting weekly hours, the average hourly earnings in Pow £5·18 in comparison to the Welsh average of £5·95 national average of £6·89. Again, the figure for Po the lowest among the Welsh counties.

The Government have had almost 12 years of o those incredible statistics have had to be dragge them. That is a disgrace. I hope that the Gov Front-Bench spokesman will respond to that an what policies the Government will follow.

Mr. Gill: Would the hon. Gentleman care to h the other significant figure which he obviously obtained from the Library, which is that the co charge in Powys will be about £170, compared w in the adjoining county which it is my priv represent?

Mr. Jones: That was an asinine and unwelcome intervention. The poll tax is hated in Wales. It has been rejected. Many people in mid-Wales have been hit greatly by the imposition of the poll tax. The Welsh people realise that a Conservative Government have imposed that unjust tax on our people.

Mr. Gill: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Jones: No, sit down.

The rural economy faces immense challenges in the short term as a result of the Government's economic mismanagement and in the longer term from the uncertain future facing farming. The upland farmer needs urgent help. He faces a genuine and deepening crisis. Does anything in this legislation offer help to the upland farmer? He struggles alone with his family in an inhospitable climate at considerable altitude for little profit, but with much physical hard work. Those farmers can only raise sheep. There is no alternative.

The National Farmers Union and the Farmers Union of Wales have told me about the plight of their members. I have met them and they were convincing. If that farming community does not receive help, it will be bankrupt. If the family farm folds, so will the village garage, the village shop, the village school, the village surgery and the village carrier. Communities in that part of Wales which are centuries old are now at risk. This is an unhappy time and for once perhaps the poetry of R. S. Thomas may be appropriate. Certainly "bitter is the taste".

Will this legislation spark an imaginative and practical response from the Government? So far the Government have been lethargic and evasive on those issues. This debate is about a way of life, a culture, a language and a landscape which are at risk and under severe pressure. As the common agricultural policy is dismantled, Welsh Office Ministers should produce a regime to sustain the upland population.

Why has the Secretary of State not been to Brussels to fight his corner for those communities? When my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Aberavon was Secretary of State, he went, did his best and was successful. I remember my journey to Brussels with the then Minister of Agriculture, the late Mr. John Silkin. We were also successful and we kept the milk marketing board in being.

How sorry I am to see the predicament facing the Secretary of State. He backed the wrong horse in the leadership stakes. Clearly he has been under the spell of his still substantial colleague, the right hon. Member for Worcester (Mr. Walker), the former Secretary of State. Perhaps his colleague threw some dust in his eyes or gave him one of the many press releases that he produced when he was Secretary of State. I am sorry to note the right hon. Gentleman's predicament. I remind him that yesterday he said:

"The best person has won and we are all united behind John Major".

I should like the right hon. Gentleman to set the record straight because the *Western Mail* states:

"Mr. Poll Tax Hunt backs Heseltine".

That was one day, but the next day the right hon. Gentleman said that the best person had won. Well, has the best person won? The Secretary of State and his team did not vote for the best man——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. We can all have a little fun with these matters, but the hon. Gentleman is straying a long way from the Bill. I am very tolerant, but I am sure that he will come back to his text.

Mr. Barry Jones: A charmingly made point, Madam Deputy Speaker. I shall obey your silken stricture and conclude simply by saying, "O ye of little faith," in the knowledge that other right hon. and hon. Members wish to speak.

My criticism is not of the board. It is doing its job effectively and with dedication. My criticism is of the ministerial team. Clearly, there is a lack of direction and, because of the Ministers, rural Wales is missing out at a time of crisis. Farming is facing major challenges. The employment scene is fragile. The schools service, the health service and the transport service are all buckling under the intense pressure. The poll tax is proving oppressive to our people. It is blighting their lives. The Bill is a stark reminder that Ministers must face up their responsibilities. I insist that they devise a strategy that will lead to success in rural Wales. I want them to give a lead, but so far they have failed.

9 pm

Mr. Keith Raffan (Delyn): The hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) should know all about backing the wrong horse. He was the parliamentary private secretary to the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey), who—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. What is good for the goose is good for the gander.

Mr. Raffan: Exactly. I could not agree with you more, Madam Deputy Speaker and I am delighted to hear that. That was my one sentence on the subject. I could not resist the temptation of knifing the hon. Gentleman good and proper.

I shall speak only briefly, because my constituency is not covered by the Development Board for Rural Wales. I am grateful to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas) for the dispensation so generously given. My excuse for making this brief speech is that, together with other hon. Members present in the Chamber, as a member of the Select Committee on Welsh Affairs I have, on several occasions, taken oral evidence from the DBRW. I join the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside in paying tribute to its previous chairman, Mr. Leslie Morgan, and to Dr. Iain Skewis, who is a fellow Scotsman. We are everywhere in Wales. I am glad that the hon. Gentleman agrees that Scotsmen do such good work in the Principality. I pay tribute also to Mr. Glyn Davies, the new chairman of the DBRW.

I shall refer later to the Select Committee hearings of 9 May 1988 at Powys castle, which the hon. Members for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey) and for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy will remember. That was the first time that I met Mr. Glyn Davies, who was then the chairman of the finance committee on Montgomeryshire district council. He is an impressive character, who has been extremely energetic in his post as chairman of the development board.

I want to outline the problem of how we define "rural Wales", a problem which arose again and again in the Select Committee. The DBRW has a synonym—it is the acronym MWD—because the Development Board for Rural Wales is also known as Mid Wales Development.

[Mr. Raffan]

Indeed, the previous chairman consistently referred to that body as Mid Wales Development, but the Bill is entitled the "Development Board for Rural Wales Bill".

In those Select Committee hearings at Powys castle on 9 May 1988, Mr. Leslie Morgan, the then chairman, made it clear that he preferred being described as the chairman of Mid Wales Development. He did not regard that organisation as purely a rural body because he would then be faced with an odious comparison as the country cousin of the Welsh Development Agency. Mr. Morgan wanted his organisation to be seen as a regional development agency. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will address the real problem of defining rural Wales because there is confusion. The DBRW's boundaries are not and cannot be as clear as those of the Highlands and Islands Development Board in Scotland. Some of the worst unemployment spots in rural Wales lie outside the boundaries of the board. That means that rural areas outside the DBRW boundary do not have equal treatment when compared with the rural areas within it.

There are two ways of dealing with that problem. One way is to review the boundaries of the board. In hearings of the Select Committee the previous chairman said that he was keen that there should be a detailed review of its boundaries. I ask my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State seriously to consider that. The chairman was keen to see the boundaries reviewed, provided that his resources would be increased as the boundaries were extended. He was not keen to see his boundaries extended if his resources remained the same.

I have read a document, which I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has seen, produced by the Institute of Welsh Affairs. The institute does some valuable studies not only for Members of Parliament but for everybody in the Principality. It has produced an interesting study entitled "Rural Wales". It tackled the definition of the rural parts of the Principality. I shall not go into that in too much detail, but basically, although it is a statement of the obvious, the document classed rural Wales as

"excluding industrial or urban South Wales and North-East Wales, whilst using district council boundaries to delineate rural Wales."

The institute preferred to use district council boundaries because that allowed the use of official statistics, which clearly are important. It defined rural Wales as:

"Colwyn, Glyndwr and Rhuddlan in Clywd"—

I was somewhat surprised at the inclusion of Rhuddlan, but I go along with it because the institute has studied the matter much more than I have—

"Dyfed except Llanelli plus Gwynedd and Powys."

If we are to stick to a definition of the DBRW as representing rural Wales, we must consider a review of the boundaries. If not, the way in which the Welsh Development Agency deals with rural Wales must be reviewed. That is important because, as the then chairman of the board, Leslie Morgan, said in a hearing two years ago implying a criticism of the performance of the Welsh Development Agency:

"It requires an act of will and decision from the WDA to determine that it will do more in its rural areas."

I represent a constituency which is predominantly urban, although it appears rural. A good two thirds of my electorate reside in towns. However, we have many of the problems that confront rural areas more severely. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will kn experienced one particular problem recently. to him for his quick help and speedy action proposal to close the Laura Ashley factory *[Interruption.]* I should be grateful if the hon. Alyn and Deeside, having opened the debate, to the speeches. It would be polite if, instead the hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek listen to what I have to say. I am making a point. It is not a party point. I am not ma political broadcast, as he did. I am seeking to the debate on rural Wales. I believe that it is is good at plagiarising. Who knows?—he m ideas in his next manifesto.

Now that I have the attention of the hon. Alyn and Deeside, I refer him to the Laura A at Leeswood. I am particularly grateful that attention because, of the 330 who were made the factory, more than half are resident in his as he will be aware. That is why I was rather s he was chatting and not paying attention. I thought that he would be worried about e constituency being made unemployed.

I pay tribute to my right hon. Friend the State for what he did in the event of the closu speedily. He got in touch with the Welsh Agency chairman, Dr. Gwyn Jones, whom I met to see what could be done to help the ar only about a third of the employees were re constituency, one relatively small communit —a former mining village—had 62 reside there. When 62 people in a relatively small co their jobs it hits the community hard.

My worries about the overlap and l definition of the roles of the Development Bo Wales and the Welsh Development Agency in examples such as that of the Laura As Expertise in dealing with rural affairs lies p with the Development Board for Rural particularly good at and has a long experienc of establishing starter units in rural areas t unemployment, which can hit small commu am not certain that the same kind of expertis the WDA. I am not seeking to criticise the does a good job in many ways, but hon. Me myself, whose constituencies are not co development board, are concerned.

We believe that the constituencies of the h for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey), for C Pembroke, North (Mr. Howells), for Meiri Conwy (Dr. Thomas) and the hon. and lea for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile)—I am sorry and learned Member is not present, but I ar has good reason to be absent on this impor for his constituency—which are covered by have two bites of the cherry in terms development in their areas and the steps tha to tackle rural unemployment and depopula us whose constituencies contain rural areas, not covered by the board, do not have the c enjoy such two-tier treatment.

Dr. Thomas: I am following the speech Gentleman with great interest, especially his interface between the two agencies and the WDA has a rural arm. What is the hon.

thinking in terms of medium and long-term development? Does he envisage that the DBRW will take in the whole of rural Wales, as normally defined by the Welsh Office, or does he believe that the rural arm of the WDA will take over from the DBRW?

Mr. Raffan: The hon. Gentleman sat next to me in the Select Committee and he will recall that I was somewhat anti the DBRW because of the two-tier treatment meted out to the rural areas that it covered which meant that they had an advantage in comparison with the rural areas outside its boundaries. Often, these are the rural areas with the highest unemployment. They do not have the advantage of the two-tier treatment. I was leaning towards the view that the DBRW conferred an unfair advantage, but the hon. Gentleman knows that I am never dogmatic and I am open to persuasion and good argument—usually such good argument comes from the Benches behind the Opposition Front Bench.

I hope that my right hon. Friend will be in office for a long time, as it is important that he should tackle the issue of the boundaries of the DBRW and what the WDA does to help rural areas.

The Laura Ashley closure at Leeswood revealed that there was no clear strategy on the part of the WDA to deal with the problem, but the closure had a great impact on that small rural community. There were two options available to deal with it. The first was to open starter units close to the village community and the second to develop one or two larger units of between 10,000 and 15,000 sq ft at the Nercwys road industrial park estate near Mold, some miles away.

Laura Ashley was a great boon to one rural area of my constituency, but perhaps its location was not the most advantageous for that company. Nevertheless, it was an important source of employment to the rural community. I accept, however, that there is no point having starter units close to the village if they are not filled. The strategy of the WDA appears to favour larger units in industrial estates or business parks closer to the towns rather than developing starter units closer to villages. Certainly the DBRW has greater experience of developing such nursery units near villages.

This debate should be about getting to grips with such problems. I am proud of the fact that I am occasionally labelled a corporatist, I am not a socialist or a crypto-socialist, but certainly I am a corporatist. I would not dream of applying to my right hon. Friend a label of which he was not proud, but the way in which the Government have pursued their policies in Wales is something from which the rest of the country can learn a great deal. That is especially apparent in my constituency where, in the past two years, unemployment has dropped dramatically by 56 per cent. That is a measure of the success of our policies.

I pay tribute to the work done by the DBRW. I do not think that, simply because of the success of its work, it should take over every rural area of Wales, but its boundaries should be reviewed in detail. The definitions used by the Institute of Welsh Affairs are a good starting point and worthy of further examination by my right hon. Friend. I also look to my right hon. Friend for a reassurance that the rural arm of the WDA and its efforts in rural districts are not overlooked, but developed. That sector of the WDA's work should not be allowed to grow stale or stagnate. It is important for those of us in parts of Wales not covered by the DBRW that the rural arm of t WDA is active, vigorous and innovative. I hope that m right hon. Friend will pay heed to what I have said.

I also hope that we can develop this debate on a futu occasion. We have few Welsh debates on the Floor of t House but perhaps we can develop this discussion in t Welsh affairs debate on 1 March next year. There a important issues for the Principality, for my constituen who are not covered by the DBRW as much as f constituents of Opposition Members who are.

9.16 pm

Mr. Roy Hughes (Newport, East): I welcome the Bi and the marginal additional spending power that provides for the Development Board for Rural Wal which, over the years, has done some good work. As th Secretary of State said in his opening remarks, it covers 4 per cent. of Wales's land mass, but only 8 per cent. of i population. Sheep outnumber people by 20 to one. Th Bill comes before us on the first day of a new Prim Minister's term of office and at a time when the country moving deeper into recession, with Wales, as usual, at th sharp end. The additional scope for the Developmer Board of Rural Wales is a mere flea bite, welcome thoug it is.

We must face the fact that the unhappy state of th British economy has a major detrimental effect on rura Wales. In housing, mortgage rates stand at about 14·5 pe cent.—an extraordinarily high rate that is way above tha which ordinary people living in mid-Wales can afford. Is any wonder that young people pack up and go? Empt houses are left for better-off people, usually from acros the border, who often turn them into holiday homes and in the process, Welsh culture and language ar undermined. The solution to that problem lies in th Government's hands and, presumably, they are at leas recognising the problem by giving this small extra fundin for the Development Board for Rural Wales.

Some people cross the border into mid-Wales a permanent residents. They should be given a traditiona Welsh welcome, but I get a bit nauseated when some o them start bellyaching when their children are taugh Welsh at school. Surely that is what they should expec when they come to live in Wales.

Rural Wales has tended to rely on agriculture which over the years, has shed many jobs. Consequently, th depopulation of that region has been quite dramatic. Fron 1891 to 1981, the population of mid-Wales fell by 23,500 whereas the total population of Wales in the same perio increased by 1 million. The mid-Wales populatio decreased from 12·6 per cent. of the Welsh population i 1891 to only 7·2 per cent. in 1981. That shows a fall i absolute and relative terms.

The big issue of jobs is essentially what the rura development board is all about. I said earlier that th board had done some good work. For instance, since 197 it is reckoned to have created 12,000 much-needed jobs However, Mr. Glyn Davies, the board's chairman recently said that the prosperity of mid-Wales would b determined by the success or otherwise of the United Kingdom economy as a whole. The single European market and the channel tunnel will also play an important part. My guess is that both will tend to increase the

[Mr. Roy Hughes]

regional imbalance in Britain. In that sense, they are likely to aggravate the problems of mid-Wales. There must be Government support to counteract such tendencies.

Let us look at what has been happening to the Welsh economy as a whole. According to the most recent official figures, manufacturing investment in Wales has fallen by more than 19 per cent. in the past decade and over the same period regional preferential treatment has been cut by £166 million. Is it any wonder that unemployment in Wales is still 6·7 per cent. of the work force, even on the basis of the Government's adulterated figures? In mid-Wales, the partial collapse of Laura Ashley has not helped. Equally, the decision to move the headquarters of that company from mid-Wales will not help to engender confidence in the area.

The new Prime Minister, when he was Chancellor of the Exchequer, clamped down on the economy, and that has had evil side effects. For example, in the past year business failures in Wales have increased by 4 per cent. That is a spectacular rise. Further evidence of the regional imbalance affecting mid-Wales can be seen in living standards. The official figures show that, although Wales has had a 3 per cent. increase in living standards over the past 10 years, that is only one ninth of the increase that has occurred in Greater London. What a contrast.

Most indicators show that Wales is at a disadvantage compared with other regions of Britain. However, when my hon. Friend the Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) speaks about some of those basic facts, he is accused of spreading doom and gloom. I do not agree with such accusations against my hon. Friend. He should be congratulated on exposing the real situation in Wales.

The infrastructure in mid-Wales is sadly lacking, and that is one of the principal causes of poverty and depopulation. The rural development board does not have the funds to do much about that, but the Government, through the Welsh Office, can improve matters. British Rail is reluctant to electrify main line services to Wales and passengers on our rural lines suffer deplorable conditions. In mid-Wales, British Rail seems to use everybody's cast-off rolling stock. The Government should show that they care about our rural communities by being prepared to subsidise transport services.

The eastern towns of mid-Wales, such as Newtown and Welshpool, are fairly close to the motorway network, which gives them an advantage. In the 1960s and 1970s, the concentration was on building the M4—what we would do without it today, I do not know. In more recent years, road building for Wales has tended to focus on the A55, the north Wales coastal road. In future, we should pay more attention to north-south road links which could do nothing but good for mid-Wales. The Minister will be aware that I tabled a spate of questions on this matter. The *Western Mail*, the daily newspaper circulating in Wales, has campaigned on this issue. The road network between the north and the south is a relic from the horse-and-cart age.

We are told that the demand is just not there, and that the number of journeys travelled do not justify such large-scale public expenditure. I feel that people do not make the journey between north and south because the facilities are so poor. For example, I am fond of Llandudo as a resort; it is a wonderful place. However, I do not go there as often as I would wish because journe Wales are so difficult. Some do not wish the improvements, which could so benefit Wale The same people expressed opposition t Severn crossing. They have what I would mentality, but I find their attitude detriment mid-Wales but to the interests of Wales as

I have only recently returned from a visit which reminded somewhat of mid-Wa fascinating to hear the Welsh language still Some of the traditional Welsh chapels we Tabernacle, Moriah, Bethel and so on. Pe have put up a tremendous fight to keep the W and culture. In Wales as a whole, we must fig share of the cake. If we achieve this, we shall position to fight for the Welsh language support the Bill. Minimal though it is, at lea step in the right direction.

9.27 pm

Mr. Richard Livesy (Brecon and supporting the Bill, I begin by paying tribu Emrys Roberts, the first chairman of the Board for Rural Wales, who sadly, pass months ago. He did sterling work in startin and he was a former Liberal Member of Merioneth. He has been followed by Mr. and now Mr. Glyn Davies, an energetic ch development board, who is using his time e

I am particularly interested in the devel because I was brought up in rural development board area. I think that I am that I and the hon. Member for Bridgend are the only two hon. Members who hav Chamber tonight who have been depop mid-Wales. That is not a pleasant experien from the area for 14 years, and when development board was operating there and good work.

I gently chide the Secretary of State on population expansion. I recommend that t research into those figures in order to happening to school leavers. I believe that exchange of population is taking place in m some of our most youthful people leavi retired people coming in, giving us a population in terms of its age.

Only last weekend, a young lad of 19 t had applied for a job with the local coun Brecon has only 3 per cent. unemployment good figure, but 72 people, mostly youngste that job. I know from personal experien people have to leave because they cannot statistics conceal a problem. I hope that will be able to investigate further to see going on. I know that there is a project happens to school leavers in mid-Wales and

I welcome the aggregate increase of re board. Looking at the board's annual repor it is noticeable that in 1986 expenditure wa and in 1990 it was scheduled to be £12·9 pleased that the Secretary of State has anno will be increased to £14·1 million. At leas progress.

Mr. Coleman: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the announcement that the Army is to leave his area means that the development board will be extremely important, because that move will cause considerable problems?

Mr. Livsey: That is an extremely important point. The Army has headquarters in Brecon and it looks likely to be demoted. I have written to the Secretary of State about that. We do not wish to see any reduction in the staff at the Army headquarters at Brecon. I hope that the Secretary of State will campaign to ensure that a major general still commands the forces at HQ Wales and that there is no reduction in status. In that respect, we deserve a similar status to Scotland. The Sennybridge range of 30,000 acres is one of the largest training areas in Wales and in the United Kingdom. Troops returning from Hong Kong and elsewhere could well be accommodated in camps in Wales such as Cwrt-y-gollen camp in Crickhowell.

I should have liked the Bill to make provision for future expenditure for the board to be increased by statutory instrument. I was told that I could not table an amendment to that effect, but I shall discuss that further in Committee.

I should like to see an extension of the board's remit in two particular areas. It is now becoming painfully obvious that, although those areas were excluded from the board's remit when it was founded, times have changed radically. I am sure that the Secretary of State will have noticed the references to the present general state of agriculture in mid-Wales. The board has said that up to 25 per cent. of the population of mid-Wales is employed in agriculture. In my constituency 18 per cent. of the population is engaged in agriculture in one way or another. The present depression in agriculture and the reduction in incomes is forcing young people out of the family farms. We must address that problem. We need more marketing. I was at the winter fair yesterday, to which the Secretary of State referred when dealing with his worthwhile initiative for food from Wales.

It is important to give the development board more resources to increase abattoir and meat packing capacity. Wales has only three abattoirs that meet EEC standards, whereas there are 20 in Scotland. That is a serious shortfall when one considers 1992 and the European single market, and the ability of Welsh farmers to market lamb efficiently and effectively in proper packs. They must compete properly in the supermarkets of not only Britain but France, Germany, elsewhere in Europe, and even Japan —which the Secretary of State visited recently.

Mr. Raffan: I strongly endorse the hon. Gentleman's point about abattoirs in the Principality. There is strong feeling on that aspect among the farmers in my community whom I met recently. New abattoirs would also generate additional employment, and the Government should look at that matter quickly.

Mr. Livsey: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his support, which the Secretary of State would find widely echoed throughout Wales.

The farming community is particularly exposed in the market place at this time. They compete only as individuals, and about 45 per cent. of the British retail market is controlled by five supermarket groups. That does not put farmers in a very good bargaining position. They need to co-operate, and to establish new abattoirs.

I was particularly disappointed when an application to build a new abattoir at Three Cocks did not come to fruition. There were problems about the land, whose owners were not prepared to sell. I understand that the Welsh Office and the development board were able to put up only 30 per cent. of grant aid support. It is well known that on the continent, and in France in particular, grant aid for abattoirs can be as high as 50 per cent., which makes a crucial difference. I shall be grateful if the Secretary of State will closely examine that aspect, to see how the board can assist more in the building of new abattoirs, especially before 1992.

Mr. Alan W. Williams (Carmarthen): The same point was forcefully made by National Farmers Union members in my constituency when I met them in September. They pointed out that Wales would be left in 1992 with only three abattoirs conforming to European standards. Meat processing is a sensible industry in rural areas because of the value-added employment that it offers. Also, rather than export our live sheep in the cruel conditions under which they are transported to the French markets, it would be much more sensible to slaughter them here and then export them as processed meat products.

Mr. Livsey: The hon. Gentleman reinforces my argument, and mentions also the important issue of live exports. Our industry will come under increasing pressure in that respect.

Under present conditions, farming families need to boost their incomes. I know of a number of recent cases in which the single son of a family farm has had to leave the business to find employment elsewhere—not just 10 miles away but hundreds of miles from home. The development board should consider providing part-time jobs to boost the incomes of farming families. Members of the family could work away from the farm two or three days a week, in order to supplement their incomes and to preserve family farms.

The other aspect that the development board has not considered is tourism. That is not in its remit either, but I should like it to be taken into account, and perhaps considered in the future.

Affordable housing is an enormous problem, as other hon. Members have pointed out. The average value of a house in my constituency often turns out be about £60,000, whereas the mortgage that can be obtained on average earnings in the local community is about £20,000. That means that it is impossible for someone on an average wage in my constituency to purchase a house.

Rented accommodation has virtually dried up. Although the development board is doing good work in terms of housing for key workers, it is especially frustrating for young people to see houses that are often empty for up to two years before they can be occupied —it can be a great heartache for them.

The development board programme has been outlined and it plans for the maintenance of 1,500 jobs per year. I note the chairman's statement that 1,000 jobs will be created in the next three years. That will not be adequate to retain a larger part of of the school leaving population, and we need to consider that.

We need to assist young entrepreneurs in central Wales. One of our problems is that we do not have enough home-bred industry. I remember my mother telling me when I was in my early 20s, "There is nothing here for you,

[Mr. Livsey]

my boy. You'll have to go away to earn a decent living". The situation has changed, but there are still too many service industries and too much local government employment compared to employment in businesses. We must encourage young entrepreneurs who are born and bred in mid-Wales. The present strategy can be improved.

I note from the report that approximately 18 towns in mid-Wales have been concentrated on to encourage growth, but it needs to spread further afield. I welcome the development board's western initiative. However, we have to spread out into some of the smaller communities and villages to balance employment.

The remarks that have been made about poor infrastructure are very important. I measured my constituency on the mileage clock of my car the other day. I started from Ystradgynlais and ended at the top of the Teme valley. I travelled 92 miles—that is a long way on a very poor road system. As other hon. Members have said, the system needs vast improvements.

We need to be geared up into a higher-waged economy. Wages in the eastern part of the area are too low. Unemployment has been brought down, although there is still a problem in the west, but wages remain very low. Far too many people work for £80 or £100 per week. Averages mean that it is still very much a case of people having their head in the fridge and their feet in the oven. Between those two poles there are bad examples of low wages.

We need to support the development board. There should not be any movement towards co-operating too closely with the Welsh Development Agency. The development board must protect its independence fiercely because it concentrates on rural areas. As the hon. Member for Delyn (Mr. Raffan) suggested, the case for other areas coming into the development area should be studied carefully. The Welsh Office should appoint a Minister to concentrate on rural areas. After all, they cover a vast area in Wales.

I have been fortunate enough to obtain space in the exhibition area. There will be an excellent exhibition for the development board from 10 to 14 December and there will be a reception on 10 December. I hope that all hon. Members present, including you, Mr. Speaker, and all Welsh Members will come along and see the good work being done by the development board. I am sure that when we next debate the development board we will all wish to increase its funding even further.

9.45 pm

Dr. Dafydd Elis Thomas (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): It is a pleasure to debate rural Wales because we do not often have the opportunity of doing so. I associate myself with what has been said by my colleagues from the region, particularly the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey), who spoke of the late Emrys Roberts. As the hon. Gentleman said, he was one of my predecessors as the Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy. I was able to count on him as a good friend. He played a distinctive role inside the House as a Liberal Member of Parliament and outside it in his enterprise, legal and cultural activities. We remember him particularly as the chairman of the Mid-Wales Development Corporation, a predecessor organisation of the development board.

It is appropriate to remember the Development Board for Rural Wales Mid-Wales Development Association, Mid-Wales Industrial Development Ass Authorities, whose leading light was M Edwards, another great Montgomeryshi still very much alive and active in develo consultant for Antur Dwyryd, the ent north-west Meirionnydd.

When the then Government institute legislation and brought it into mid-Wale development corporation, the team a Industrial Development Association p from which the Development Board for established.

I am listing the organisations because plea that we should not look for too mu way in which statutory agencies communities. The hon. Member for D said that at one time he leant towar combination of agencies working tog who have a lifelong interest in rural de leaned towards a concept of integrated that produces some sort of line mana happy hour that I spent in the Mon morning, I tend to take a different app broad brushes and concentration. A agencies are coterminous and overla provide different textures of enterp development activity.

I want an assurance from the Secreta sure that he will be able to give it—that the Development Board for Rural Wale as long as the Governm t continue. gentle rhetoric of the hon. Member for (Mr. Jones) that a Labour Government- to be one—would also continue the acti There has been loose talk in som strengthening the rural arm of the W Agency. That is important in areas of r outside the territory of the Developme Wales. However, strengthening the rura does not mean reducing the powers o board and strengthening the overall Development international does not m development board's marketing rol Kingdom and beyond.

Mr. Barry Jones: I make it clear that cent. behind the Development Board Having heard about his broad-brush that the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Thomas) will consider the royal collect museum in Cardiff and the Mostyn ga where Piper is exhibited. There are g Wales as well as the serial numbers of

Dr. Thomas: I was pleased to see collection, "Rouen cathedral", in the R I am an internationalist, as the hon. M glad to hear his commitment to the fu

I want to consider the interface of a only the WDA and the DBRW—I hop follow all these acronyms—but the W and the Agricultural Development which is the authority for redire

diversification in agriculture. Linked with that are the activities of local government economic development officers and, more recently, the enterprise agencies, which are working in the constituency of the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Howells), which is part of the DBRW area, and in Antur Dwyryd. In addition, there is the activity of large voluntary landowners such as the National Trust and our recently announced Snowdonia appeal, which we hope will bring additional voluntary and private sector funds into the area.

There are other agencies that I have not mentioned, but I list those to emphasise that we have a diversity of organisations and that it should be possible to have an approach that maximises their contribution without looking for a simplistic structure. Therefore, we must consider how we can collaborate on working parties and projects in which the various agencies take the lead role.

In the context of rural Wales, we look particularly to the western initiative of the board and to the activity of its new offices in Machynlleth, which have been successful in answering queries and stimulating interest. The enterprise culture is developing as a bilingual enterprise culture in that part of the world.

We face a number of fairly major crises. In my own patch, there is the future of the energy industry and of the Magnox station at Trawsfynydd. We are still waiting to hear about the extension of the life of that station, which is under the control of the nuclear installations inspectorate. Obviously, we all want to see the maintenance of jobs for as long as possible in environmentally safe conditions, but in the next five or 10 years there will be a major closure involving 600 job losses. Obviously, there will be jobs in decommissioning, which is a complex and difficult technology, but there will be substantial job losses.

We need to plan for that in the same way as we planned for steel and coal enclosures, for which there was a major input of resources. I am aware that Nuclear Electric is not able to do what British Steel and British Coal were able to do, but we need an approach which matches that, and we look for help from the European regional development fund and for further enhancement of DBRW funds. I am sure the local enterprise agency in Antur Dwyryd will have a particular role to play.

We must consider that in terms of a task force and a project-led approach which anticipates and itemises the skills that are already available in the area, encourages people to move into the self-employed or small enterprise sector and seeks co-operative activity. There is a range of possibilities, provided that we are ready in time to anticipate those closures.

I very much endorse what has been said about the need to improve the abattoir facilities in mid-Wales. We must add value to our agriculture produce. I pay tribute to the work of Welsh Lamb Enterprise, which is based in mid-Wales, which has been active in its promotion. We must back that up with investment programmes in abattoir capacity to bring us up to the standard that we need to export our cuts. As I was told when I was last at the Commission talking about these issues, there are still opportunities in the Spanish and Italian lamb markets. Forty per cent. of the German lamb market—there is opportunity for growth—is taken up by New Zealand. That country is not exporting lamb on the hoof to Germany, but it prepares cuts so that they are attractive German housepersons. That is a lesson for us all on ho to produce and market our goods.

One of the first appearances by the Secretary of Sta for Wales in his new post was when he dressed as a wai at a Welsh Lamb Enterprise promotion and wore an apr showing the excellent Lamb Enterprise logo. I know th he is already convinced, so I hope that he will put no money behind his commitment to Welsh lamb.

Mr. Raffan: There is great concern even in the farmi community about the number of sheep farmers wh contribute towards Welsh Lamb Enterprise. We need make the farming community much more aware of t need to market its products. It is pretty appalling when o can go into a butcher's shop in a village in my constituen and find three posters advertising New Zealand lamb.

Dr. Thomas: Far be it from me to suggest that the ho Gentleman should change his butcher.

Mr. Raffan: I did not buy the lamb.

Dr. Thomas: Oh. My hon. Friend the Member fo Ceredigion and Pembroke, North pays 4p at least p animal. Every other Welsh lamb producer should do th same.

I wish to refer to the interrelationship between what th board does in terms of manufacturing and small-sca enterprise and its more general aim to improve the quali of life in mid-Wales—for example, the social developme and infrastructure programmes. In a consultancy capacit the board has produced ideas and has worked with Britis Rail and other major agencies to upgrade amenities an the infrastructure.

I pay tribute not only to the late Emrys Roberts but t an amazing friend, John Hughes, who for 13 years wa secretary of the board and ended his career as soci development director far too young. He was also one o the leading lights of Newtown football club. Hall football pitches and television reception facilitie throughout mid-Wales benefited from the social develop ment programme in which he was involved. I want t ensure that such a programme continues under the boar and that there is no reduction in those activities.

I do not want any of the board's functions privatised moved out of Ladywell house and given to consultant from outside the area. There has been concern that, unde new management in the board, there may be a tendency t look at ways of moving activities out of house an reducing the interface between the board, as a accountable organisation within the community, and th local community. I want an assurance that the cor activities of the board are not privatised. It is not just factory-building or industrial estate agency, but a soci development agency. To return to my impressionis analogy, social development in the countryside is a sof touch technique which relates to the fabric and texture o society.

Dr. Iain Skewis, the board's chief director, was als enthusiastic about soccer tournaments, especially fo young people. He brought skills that only a Scots perso can bring to the development of mid-Wales. His experienc at the Highlands and Islands development board brough into mid-Wales a flamboyant and always straight style Sometimes he created a bit of a stir in certain loca authority planning agencies, but that was all to the good

[Dr. Thomas]

because it gave the board a high profile. I should like to pay as handsome a tribute as I can to his work and the time that he devoted to mid-Wales.

The new chairman, Gwyn Jones—whom many of us knew in his earlier incarnation as a very active chair of Montgomeryshire district council—graced the borders of my constituency and Montgomeryshire with a huge, garish sign announcing, "Croeso i Faldwyn" —"Welcome to Montgomeryshire". That was one of his first actions as the council chair, and he has brought the same style to the development board.

Wales is blessed with many quangos. A great triumvirate now runs three of the main ones. Wyn Jones, of the Welsh Development Agency, brings his own Hollywood style to the job of running a Welsh quango; Prys Edwards, of the Welsh tourist board, has brought his own cultural approach to the job—he, too, is always well groomed—

It being Ten o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Development Board for Rural Wales Bill may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Greg Knight.]*

Question again proposed, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Dr. Thomas: As I was saying, we have a triumvirate. The third member, Glyn Davies, has also brought his inimitable style to the development board.

In the absence of an elected Government in Wales, we could do a great deal worse. Those people are giving their time to public service, and providing an upbeat image of what goes on in the country. The Opposition parties are not turning a blind eye to the reality of social deprivation and economic problems such as unemployment and low incomes; we are well aware of those problems. However, we also want to emphasise the good news—not just the positive aspects of Government policy, but the benefits of voluntary activity undertaken by the people. Many are incomers—"born-again Welsh", as I call them—who bring their skills into Wales, making cheese in Dyfed, or honey ice cream in Towyn. I must not leave out Towyn, which contains some of my nicest constituents.

Whatever they may be doing, those people have brought a new energy to Wales. It is all part of the new upbeat attitude. Wales, and mid-Wales in particular, has become a location for inward investment of multinational capital, because of the attractiveness of the area, the skills of the labour force and the existence of a corporate Welsh state—if I may take up the point made by the hon. Member for Delyn.

All this is because of the form of selective intervention that we are operating—the combination of public-sector activity on the part of the Welsh Office and the agencies, and the activities of local authorities and the voluntary sector. Some of the workers have been involved in development for 20 or 25 years. Obviously, the interest of multinationals in making relative profits in the location is part of the equation: people locate in Wales not for reasons of charity, but because it makes economic sense.

The reason for all those developments is not only the decision of the multinationals to locate outside the metropolitan centres and to turn to the regions, but the willingness of Wales and its institutions to play the game. I pay tribute to the Minister of State, not just because he has been in the Welsh Office longer than the Secretary of State; he has been involved in every aspect of inward investment, linking that involvement with his work as Minister for rural Wales. My hon. Friend the Member for Brecon and Radnor says that we do not have such a Minister, but the Minister of State must do that job, because of his brief.

We are celebrating the provision of new money—I am advised that that is what it is, so I am able to welcome it. I hope that my advisers and those of the Secretary of State agree about that. We also welcome the additional borrowing power, and look forward to a long rolling programme for the board, in collaboration with the other agencies. In that, we will be able to build on the massive contribution of people like the late Emrys Roberts and the late John Hughes.

10.4 pm

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): My comments will not be very different in tone from what other hon. Members have said, and I have no intention of voting against Second Reading. The Bill is important for central and rural Wales and the increases provided will be very welcome.

The Development Board for Rural Wales did not get everything right and there were problems with over-expansion in the new towns and the bringing in of too many people from outside the area and outside Wales. As a result, we still have bad housing shortages. Perhaps more attention should be paid to local growth. We have to bring in businesses to help to advance the economy of rural Wales, but we must do that while bearing in mind the local people first and foremost.

I was slightly worried by the remarks made by my hon. Friend the Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones). He said that we need more roads to unify Wales. We certainly need more roads, but I am not sure whether we necessarily need them to unify Wales. It is important to unify Wales, but money is extremely limited. If we are to spend money on roads, as we should, we should do so to help the economy of Wales and to help people who travel to and from Wales and different parts of England and those who travel within Wales. If we unify Wales we will simply have roads between north and south Wales so that local government councillors and officers, Members of Parliament and all sorts of administrators can get into their cars and consume petrol, which is a non-renewable resource, instead of travelling by train.

Roads are important. We need better roads from the M4 into Cardiganshire from Carmarthen to Aberaeron or from Carmarthen to Aberystwyth. However, the criteria for building those roads must be right. They should not be built because of status or because of a need to unify one part of Wales with another.

Mr. Raffan: I agree with the hon. Gentleman. I am sure that he would accept what the previous chairman of the DBRW said—I believe that the present chairman agrees with this—which is that the crucial roads to the local economy of mid-Wales are east-west links rather than north-south links.

Dr. Marek: There is a lot in that. Roads from Aberaeron or Aberystwyth to Carmarthen are important

because they would join that area to the M4, which runs east to west. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Alyn and Deeside had that kind of programme in mind.

I agree with nearly every point that has been made tonight. Farming is vital to rural Wales. I disagree slightly with the hon. Member for Delyn (Mr. Raffan). It is not a matter of not buying New Zealand lamb and buying Welsh lamb. Of course we must buy Welsh lamb whenever possible, but we survive as a trading nation. We should be able to compete. Many of us would say that Welsh lamb is better than New Zealand lamb, but we should not try to ban New Zealand lamb.

Land in Wales is only good for sheep. Land in New Zealand is certainly good for sheep, too, but the land in other areas like England and France is good for sheep and many other things. If the agricultural system is such that those other things are not produced, the other parts of Europe and especially England, France and Spain might turn to sheep rearing. If that happens, we shall lose out in Wales. That is my great fear.

The Government should be able to regulate the industry so that we are allowed to do the things in Wales that we are best at doing. There is a serious crisis in farming in rural Wales. The Government must consider that carefully and they must fight their corner in the corridors of Brussels on that point.

I am sponsored by the National Union of Railwaymen and want to make two points about the railway connections between Wales and England. Unfortunately, it is no longer possible to make any comments about railway connections between north and south Wales because one has to go into England to make such a connection. There would be nothing wrong with that, provided that the service was good.

The mid-Wales line, from Aberystwyth to Shrewsbury, has had a good service, with InterCity rolling stock. The Cambrian coast express leaves Euston at about 3.40 pm and the public can travel all the way through mid-Wales to Aberystwyth in comfortable InterCity rolling stock. The train leaves Aberystwyth at about 7.20 am and travels back to the capital. I understand that that service is to be withdrawn next May. We should be advancing as a nation, not regressing. Central Wales will have to rely on a sprinter service. It can take about two hours 20 minutes to travel from Aberystwyth to Shrewsbury, but everybody in central Wales will have to make that journey on a sprinter.

Not many hon. Members—apart from hon. Members representing Wales—realise how difficult it is to get to central Wales. If central Wales is to develop, communications must be good. There is no airfield and the roads need improving. They are not very good and the journey gets worse as one travels by car to London, because the motorway cannot cope with the traffic. We must therefore have a good railway system, but it takes five and a half hours to travel from Aberystwyth to London.

I represent Wrexham and it is easy for me to travel from Wrexham to London. I can do it in two hours 50 minutes by the fastest train. I believe that hon. Members representing the north-west coast can make their journey in even less time. If one travels to Aberystwyth from London, one spends over five hours on a train, yet British Rail is proposing to withdraw the only comfortable service from next May. It is the only service that business men would dream of using. I believe that the Bill could help the development board to persuade British Rail to maintain the service. Perhaps the DBRW could even provide some extra funding to help British Rail to do so.

Dr. Thomas: I am sometimes accused in the House of speaking for the Government, but I am certainly not speaking for British Rail. My understanding is that British Rail is to introduce rolling stock for the local haul routes similar to that which is available in the highlands of Scotland which is the super sprinter.

Dr. Marek: The hon. Gentleman may be right and British Rail may introduce the super sprinter—the class 158. Let me disillusion the hon. Gentleman now, because there is no way in which that train will run from Wrexham to Euston. The latest plan is for the train to go via Birmingham to Nuneaton, then on to the overpass at Nuneaton, and to travel to Leicester before proceeding down to St. Pancras. That is a tortuous journey.

The Minister of State, Welsh Office (Sir Wyn Roberts): I have been speaking to senior officials of British Rail this morning and I can confirm what the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas) has been saying, and that it is British Rail's intention to introduce the 158s, which will provide a better service, from next May. British Rail is also taking a look at all its regional services in Wales with a view to improving them.

Dr. Marek: I hope that we shall have a bipartisan policy on this, because that is what Wales needs if we are to ensure that the service does not deteriorate. The Minister must be aware that the early morning service from Aberystwyth to Shrewsbury has been withdrawn and that the last service from Shrewsbury to Chester is also being withdrawn. Furthermore, the area manager for Chester has been told to make cuts of £2 million by next April, which will mean a loss of staff and services. He must know that the Bidston line will be single in perhaps two or three years.

In a friendly way, I warn the Minister to be careful about what British Rail tells him. "Improvements" usually turn out in practice to be cuts in services. Importantly for the development board's area, I am not sure that a class 158 sprinter, however grand, can make up for the loss of an InterCity service direct to Euston. It will be difficult for passengers to know whether to go to Euston or St. Pancras to get a train to Wales. For some services which go through Birmingham they may have to go to Paddington. That is not an improvement.

If we had the money and British Rail had the finance available, Euston could be the one station for passengers travelling between Wales and London. There should be at least one direct train a day between Euston along the electrified line to Shrewsbury and then to Aberystwyth, using InterCity class coaches. That is important.

I do not wish to take too long, but I wish to make an equivalent point about the north Wales main line which feeds into Blaenau Ffestiniog, which is an important part of the area of the DBRW. Again, class 47 engines will be withdrawn in one or two years. British Rail has refused to say when, but in practice and according to the proposed timetable, it will be in 1992. It is intended to replace those trains with high-speed trains. Again, the HSTs decanted from the east coast main line will not travel to Euston. They will travel to Nuneaton and thence to Leicester and St. Pancras.

[Dr. Marek]

The trains are expensive to run and have a life of only about eight years. Significantly, when they are introduced, there will be no train leaving Euston for north Wales at about 5 pm—an important time. That will have a serious effect on our infrastructure and transport connections between the north of Wales and Euston. There is a case for electrifying that line, as the Minister and the Secretary of State must know.

If the line were electrified, how much would it cost? I am told that it would cost about £60 million. What percentage of that money would be available from Europe? How much money would be available from the European regional development fund? The line will be in a development grant area. How much extra money would be available from the European grant for improving international railway lines connecting different member states of the European Community? The Crewe-Holyhead line is the only such line in Britain. Perhaps the fast line through Kent to the channel tunnel could be another example but certainly north of London the Crewe-Holyhead line is the only one that would qualify for such help.

How many millions of pounds will be available if that line is electrified? Let us suppose that half of the money is available. If the interest on capital employed is 4 per cent., if the cost was £60 million and if half of the money were available from Europe, immediately the interest on the capital employed by British Rail would rise to 8 per cent., which would be above its target. For that reason, British Rail will not electrify the line because it knows very well that, because of the additionality principle, the Government will take the money that it receives from Europe away from its grants in a future year.

So British Rail will rightly say, "We are happy to electrify that line but if we do, the Government will take away the grant so we shall receive only 4 per cent. on the capital employed. There are other areas where the scarce resources would be better employed and we could get a better rate of return on our capital." The result is that there is money sitting in Europe which we could use, but for our silly administrative procedures.

Sir Wyn Roberts *indicated dissent.*

Dr. Marek: If the Minister believes that I am wrong, I should be happy to let him intervene. I had hoped that the Government would agree that, because of a silly administrative system, we have lost out. Some people say that three quarters of the money would be supplied by Europe for the electrification of the line—£45 million out of £60 million. If that is so, it is a crying shame that that money cannot be used because of administrative procedures followed by the Government.

I do not want to make a party political point about the electrification of the line, but we should unite about it in Wales. We should recognise that money would be given to us, without any strings attached, if we electrified the line.

I hope that I have argued my case sensibly and without acrimony and party political bias. This subject should unite Wales. When we have the ability to use European money, we should do so. We should not let procedures between British Rail and the Government prevent us from so doing. I hope that the Government will consider the case carefully and that, where appropriate, the DBRW will also be asked for assistance.

10.20 pm

Mr. Geraint Howells (Ceredigion and Pembroke North): I have the pleasure of living within the catchmen area of Mid Wales Development. I have resided there al my life. George Borrow, a well-known Englishman who travelled Wales from north to south many decades ago said, on passing through our village:

"This is an area where men will live when crows will die" I have had the privilege to live in a part of Wales which am so proud.

I am delighted that hon. Members on both sides of th House are united in their deliberations to say thank yo for the excellent work done by Mid Wales Developmen over the years. I remember the early 1950s when it all cam about. A few county councillors from Cardigan Montgomery, Meirionnydd, Brecon and Radnor go together because they were worried about the rate o depopulation from mid-Wales. Many young people wer leaving and I remember one alderman getting up in th county council and saying, "I remember the turn of th century when the population of Cardiganshire was at it highest. Here we are 50 years later, and the population i dwindling." I am delighted that, 40 years later, mid-Wale is thriving. That is due to the excellent work of thos pioneers who thought to set up a development board fo rural Wales.

We have made a few mistakes. I do not blame the Tor Government of the early 1970s or the Labour Governmer of the late 1960s. The Bill concerning the rur development board that was introduced by the Labou Government in the 1960s was intended to ensure tha agriculture came under the remit of the DBRW.

Unfortunately, the Bill went too far and an element o compulsion was introduced. For example, a farmer wh wanted to sell a piece of land or his farm had to ga permission of the chairman of the development boar Many of us fought hard against that incursion on th liberties of the individual. We won our case, rightly so, i 1969. I am sure that that problem was an oversight by th then Labour Government. The Tory Government of 197 decided to abolish the previous legislation. In the la 1970s a new Bill was introduced by the then Labou Government and accepted. We are by now united in ou belief that the board has done excellent work.

Hon. Members from both sides of the House ha referred to agriculture and I believe that the Governme and the Secretary of State should take another look at th board's remit, which should include agriculture within th catchment area of mid-Wales.

Mid-Wales has been transformed. Let us imagine wh would have happened to our language, culture an economy if we had not had the board in mid-Wales. If w are all so committed to the Development Board for Rur Wales and the excellent work of the Welsh Developme Agency, so complimentary of the Welsh Office and want see all those organisations flourish, we should all be unit in our deliberations. If those organisations are doing su excellent work for the people of Wales, we should have Welsh Assembly to ensure that they all get together to lo after the interests of the Welsh people.

To be fair to him, the Secretary of State is a go Welshman, as is the shadow Secretary of State, the ho

Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones), who has Wales at heart. They should get together and think seriously of bringing forward proposals as good as those suggested by our forefathers for the development of rural Wales, so that, by the turn of the century, we can have our own Parliament run by our own people to look after our own interests.

10.26 pm

Mr. Alun Michael (Cardiff, South and Penarth): While the Bill simply raises the legal limits on the financing of the Development Board for Rural Wales, it does not, of itself, give new money. It is right and proper that it should be seized on as an opportunity to discuss the Government's strategies towards rural Wales.

There have been several useful contributions to tonight's debate, not least that of the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Howells), who emphasised the unity of purpose and aspiration that exists in the House. My hon. Friend the Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) and others rightly referred to the importance of public transport.

The hon. Member for Delyn (Mr. Raffan), while sounding like an express train without tracks, illustrated the confusion and despair that arise at times of industrial closure. He should address his strictures to the guilty men in the Cabinet who have been responsible for this country's economic plight. The reply to his crocodile tears was given by my hon. Friend the Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes), who highlighted the fact that a new Prime Minister moves into No. 10 Downing street as the country moves into a recession which he has helped to create. The effect of that recession on the rural economy has been, and will be, devastating, and we cannot ignore that in the context of tonight's debate.

The hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey) rightly highlighted the need for a balance of ages in the communities of rural Wales and his suggestions about the support of family farms and the place of tourism in the economy of rural Wales were constructive and should be followed up. I hope that the Secretary of State will respond to those comments.

The remarks of the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas) contained much that was unexceptionable. He appears to have time to attend the Monet exhibition as well as lecturing in Scotland and was as petty as ever in his references to the Labour party. He should have more confidence in my hon. Friend the Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) as well as the imminence of a Labour Government who would certainly not only retain the Development Board for Rural Wales established by a previous Labour Government, but provide the proper economic and social framework within which its work will be greatly enhanced. If he has any doubts about the future of the board, I suggest that he checks the Government's intentions. There is certainly no doubt of the Labour party's intentions, but he is always kinder to the Conservative party than to the Labour party.

I welcomed the Secretary of State's remarks about the importance of close co-operation between all the organisations involved. I hope that he will take that policy wider than he did in his introduction. He also spoke of sustaining communities in the most vulnerable districts and the high proportion of elderly people in the rural communities, which requires the Government, as well as improving the economy, to give resources to the social infrastructure.

The Secretary of State also spoke about the importance of agriculture. Research by economists at Aberystwyth suggests that Britain could lose about 12,000 jobs in agriculture and another 12,000 in related employment. That underlines the importance of the work of the Development Board for Rural Wales in stimulating other sectors of the rural economy to create compensating employment opportunities. The development of high-tech industries which can operate in rural areas brings opportunities but also brings a need for adequate training. The rural areas face difficulties about such training because of failures throughout the economy.

As the Secretary of State said, the board has adopted a smaller scale and more diffuse approach. He called it the western approach. The board also encourages a more economically self-sustaining approach. That is important because, as Trawsfynydd reminds us, large-scale industries in rural areas can have a distorting and destabilising effect on the rural economy.

A recent House of Lords Select Committee on the European Communities report makes strong reference to the need for coherence in planning. In its conclusion the report refers to the Development Board for Rural Wales and states that it is one of three United Kingdom bodies which

"have proved successful in promoting diversification of the rural economy and remain the proper vehicles through which to channel public support for rural economy and social development."

I emphasise the words "and social development" and I shall return to them.

The report also states:

"The Government should provide broad strategic guidance on the way in which the countryside should develop. Without such guidance rural policies will continue to suffer from lack of integration, lack of targeting and an imbalance in resource allocation . . . . There is a need for greater institutional coordination at local level".

Hon Members will be aware of concern about the lack of a coherent approach to marina developments in Wales. I highlight that as an example of an area where the Secretary of State should build in greater co-operation and adopt a slightly wider approach than he showed in his speech. He will be aware that the Countryside Commission report for 1990 speaks of the importance of a policy for marinas. It states:

"It is essential to develop policy in this area, in response to the burgeoning number of proposals received."

It is an example of one form of development which needs a coherent approach.

As a result of pressure, over the past 18 months the Wales Tourist Board brought together the statutory bodies and local authorities. It did that with the public blessing of the Minister of State, Welsh Office who commented favourably on that co-ordinated approach. I am delighted that he did so. Nine months of discussion resulted in a statement of policy being drawn up, and that is to the advantage of development and conservation alike. A strategic all-Wales approach instead of a sporadic approach is precisely what is needed in this and in approaches to other forms of development and planning.

I understand that the report was ready at Easter but that the Welsh Development Agency declined to sign the statement that was drawn up, even though it was involved in the whole process. I understand that they obtained

[Mr. Alun Michael]

concessions for their point of view, which is the whole point of a consultative process. I also understand that no clear and public explanation has been given for that refusal to sign.

The Secretary of State and his colleagues should ensure that the statement is published as soon as possible. They should urge the chairmen of the two bodies to appreciate that they need to become involved as full parties in the process. The Secretary of State should reaffirm the Government's support for this process and he should tell us how the Welsh Office will ensure a sustainable and sensitive strategy that can be implemented with authority and not just left as an aspiration which can be shelved and ignored in the development of future policies.

I am pleased that many professional bodies are increasingly willing to look outside their own narrow or special interests. For example, but for today's debate I would have been speaking to the conference of the Association of Countryside Rangers which this year meets in Wales. Its conference concentrates on new roles in the community of the countryside and the strengthening of links between communities and their surroundings. As well as ideas for looking at working and needs of communities and practical projects, it is trying to develop

"a wider appreciation of the network of agencies and individuals involved in countryside care and how to build working relationships with them."

That is wise and practical, and it is the approach that the Government must urge on their agencies. However, these issues of conservation and development can be resolved only if a partnership approach is made unavoidable. That should involve not only farmers, conservationists and landowners sitting down together to work out policy approaches, but residents, local authorities, developers, development corporations and Government Departments.

That is too uncomfortable an interface to be achieved on a voluntary basis, except in the most unusual of circumstances because most of the groups mentioned will avoid the difficult bits of co-operation if they can, on the understandable and reasonable ground that they are too busy getting on with the job to spend the time, unless they are assured of proper results that will mean something to everybody involved, leading to coherent, long-term approaches to the countryside.

We look to the Secretary of State for an assurance that he will not take short cuts or easy ways so that development in the countryside looks dynamic, while ignoring the views and voices of everybody involved. That warning is necessary because the Government have gone down that road, and the experience of several urban development corporations in England proved the dangers that can arise if development is encouraged in isolation from the interests of the community.

In respect of the community and the responsibilities for the social infrastructure, I emphasise the importance of the health service to economic development. This has been stressed to me by people in mid-Wales when I have had discussions with them. There is evidence that it is a consideration for firms considering relocation. Mid-Wales has the hospital at Bronglais in Aberystwyth, and certain issues about the hospital service in the eastern part of mid-Wales need to be addressed. There are problems if people have to look over the border to England for their hospitals services, or to the extreme western po mid-Wales, Aberystwyth, for their treatment. T especially true when treatment has to be o considerable time, and that is again related to tra problems.

Community care is extremely important, and w be entering difficult times in this because of the dela implementation. These problems will hit urban area they will be writ large in rural areas becau communications and the demographic changes to several hon. Members have referred. Education, tr and public transport are all part of the pattern, underline the fact that the DBRW has a responsibil social development. The difficulty comes in how responsibility is discharged, and what finances w available to it. In a budget of nearly £20 million, the be a reduction in the statutory authority social gran the next few years.

It is interesting to contrast what happened in th year or two with what happened under the last L Government. The latest annual report, for 1988-89, Government publications, is a rather more document than its predecessors, but in it the cha refers to

"improved social facilities that accompany and depe economic development."

Up to a point, that is true, but social facilities depend on economic development. As I have alread economic development depends on social infrastru The statement in the accounts reflects a pious cla business growth to be

"supported by a corresponding growth in opportunities."

The board's social policy cannot match that aspi with the sums of money available. It is nonsense to s that the DBRW can compensate for the i Government policy.

Genuine social infrastructure work and the de ment of community facilities are needed, not just by of grants to the village halls and small comm facilities, but by means of help for the social infrastru Perhaps that should be from the work of Government agencies and perhaps it should be dev by the DBRW. Either way, it needs to be develo stress again the interdependency of policies for de ment and policies for society as a whole.

I contrast that with the first annual report whi presented to the then Secretary of State, my right ho learned Friend the Member for Aberavon (Mr. M which made strong reference to social development —much stronger than has been the case in subs reports. It said:

"The board's task is one of social as well as ec development."

The expenditure in that year was £250,000 in th year's part-year budget—very significant in comp with the £6 million which was the second year b when that element of the board's spending rose to £1 million, £996,941 in the first two years. The despite the growth in the budget, there has been a r and a cut in the percentage of the budget in respect social and social infrastructure responsibilities DBRW.

In responding to my hon. Friend the Member fo and Deeside with a breakdown of where the financ go within the board's work, will the Secretary of St

us how much will go to address the social infrastructure of the rural areas and where his other policies will pull in resources to that end?

Finally, I underline again that successive Conservative Governments have steadily eroded the planning system in Britain, which has particular importance in rural Wales. I appeal to the Secretary of State to take this opportunity to halt that process. Structure plans and local plans have been replaced by strategic guidance and unitary development plans. But the guidance is neither strategic nor particularly useful to local authorities seeking to reconcile the demands of their communities and wider regional and national priorities. It is not good enough for the Government to take a short-term view, following market demands and neglecting the important task of long-term planning.

I ask the Secretary of State to take this opportunity to avoid the worst of this by ensuring that the DBRW takes a co-operative approach in which development is sensitive to the community and to the environment, and to give us an assurance that the Government's resources and the policies that he operates in the Welsh Office will complement community development as a whole as well as seeking new jobs for the rural communities of Wales.

10.42 pm

Mr. David Hunt: This has been an interesting debate with some excellent contributions. I think that we have had nine speeches and several interventions, and we have covered a lot of ground. We have managed to cover care in the community and the health service as well as education, social services and all the other aspects of life in Wales.

But our prime purpose has been the DBRW, and one thing that has come across—I am delighted that it has—is the respect and admiration that we all have for the work of all those involved in the board and the illustrious predecessors of Glyn Davies in Leslie Morgan and the late Emrys Roberts. A number of tributes have been paid and I thank hon. Members for their kind words about the board's work. We are proud of the tremendous commitment of all those involved.

The hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) asked me about figures. With regard to the special rural action programme, the areas covered by the additional £1 million for that programme include, first, workshops and enterprise centres; secondly, enterprise stimulation, which includes local business expansion schemes, workshop promotion, training, branded farmgate shop schemes, practical research and work with schools and industry; and, thirdly, social, which includes community agents and special rural social development, with emphasis on improved quality of life and increased access to facilities. The precise allocations will be decided by the board according to the priorities that it determines.

The hon. Gentleman knows the way in which the board currently allocates its resources. One main area is running costs and salaries, fees and charges for professional services, computer and estate management, research, promotion and publicity—which amount to more than £5 million. Capital expenditure on land, factories and other construction amounts to £1·3 million in the current year. Construction and site works, particularly in respect of advanced factories, amounts to nearly £6 million. Grants to discretionary and public bodies, and cultural and welfare services total nearly £2 million.

The hon. Gentleman asked about the north-south link, and made what I like to think was an affectionate acknowledgement of the troubles that I am experiencing in travelling between north and south Wales. I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Minister of State—and to his travels—and to the sharp focus that he has brought to the importance of making improvements all the time through imaginative schemes. Significant improvements have already been made to the A483 and the A470, and other schemes already under construction include the Llanidloes bypass and the Felinfach-Brecon bypass improvement, which will continue to upgrade those routes.

I pay tribute also to my hon. Friend the Member for Delyn (Mr. Raffan), who raised a number of important issues—one of which was mentioned by several other hon. Members. I refer to the synergy with the Welsh Development Agency. We are particularly fortunate that support for rural development is provided by my Department and a number of other public agencies under the wing of the Welsh Office, such as the WDA and Welsh tourist board, as well as the Development Board for Rural Wales.

The WDA recently published a policy document, entitled "Rural Prosperity", and the proposals detailed in that publication will help to achieve further improvements in the prosperity of, and quality of life in, those rural communities for which the WDA has responsibility. I make particular reference to the words of the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Howells). It is important to realise the seriousness with which the WDA takes its responsibilities for those parts of rural Wales for which it has particular obligations.

The creation of a rural affairs division in the WDA is a worthwhile and welcome development, and shows clearly that the agency is cognisant of the unique problems and challenges of rural areas. That innovation will help to provide the right impetus in holding back the drift of young people to the big cities, by providing them with high-quality jobs within their own communities.

Like the development board, the WDA will work closely with local authorities and local people in those initiatives. It is that synergy that will make such schemes successful. To ensure further success, I stress the need—as did my hon. Friend the Member for Delyn—for people and organisations, public and private, to work closely together. I am confident that that will be the case, which will ensure greater achievements.

My hon. Friend also mentioned Laura Ashley. If there are points that I am unable to cover in the time available, I shall of course respond in much more detail to hon. Members in correspondence.

My hon. Friend mentioned boundaries, as did the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North. Although as Secretary of State for Wales I have power, by virtue of section 1(2) of the main Act, to extend the board's boundaries, until now it has always been considered that it would not be right to do so. I recall that the issue was studied by the financial management review in 1986, and it concluded that any extension to the board's territory would merely dilute its efficiency and resources. We must always bear in mind how important it is to focus, and to have a focus. However, the question of extending the territory of the Development Board for Rural Wales is,

[Mr. David Hunt]

and will be, kept under continual review, and I shall arrange for it to be reconsidered as part of the board's financial and management policy review in 1991.

The hon. Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes) raised some important issues, and quoted a number of important statistics. The only trouble was that they differed from some of the statistics that I quoted. Before I comment further on that, I should like time to reflect on the derivation of his statistics and to verify my own. I believe that mine were correct. He raised a number of important points, and I should like to respond to him in due course.

The hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey) mentioned a problem which is hidden in the statistics—unemployed young people. That was a very important point. He also raised the question whether the Development Board for Rural Wales should have a more specific project for abattoir provision. I have spoken to the chairman of the board, and I know that it recognises the strategic importance of approved abattoirs come 1992. However, it has no current plans under way to develop an abattoir in mid-Wales. The hon. Gentleman referred to the application at Three Cocks, Brecon. That application for an integrated meat processing plant at Three Cocks was submitted by the DBRW in 1989. Subsequently it had to be withdrawn, as the landowner was unwilling to sell. I know that the board is willing to respond positively to any approach from an operator.

The hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas) asked about the future of the DBRW. We should not bring forward this legislation if it were not clear that the board has a future, and there are no plans whatsoever to alter the present statutory arrangements for the agencies in Wales. They are doing an excellent job. Very committed people operate within them, and I see no reason to disturb the arrangements. However, I hope that he recognises that it is necessary continually to review their functioning and operation to ensure that they deliver an efficient and effective service within their remit.

As for the nuclear power station, the problem is several years away, but the north-west Wales training and enterprise council is already starting exploratory discussions with the industry about possible retraining of workers, and I think that that is a proper way to deal with the matter.

I have to tell the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North that I know that the DBRW recognises that its remit does not cover agriculture, because that is a matter for the Department of Agriculture within the Welsh Office. However, the role of agriculture is significant in a rural area such as ours. The board has told me that it seeks to build other businesses to help to ensure alternative jobs for those who might previously have formed the agricultural work force. I am reassured that the board is intensifying and focusing its efforts to find ways of adding value to existing agricultural production and to funding alternative work.

The hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) made several points about railways and rail links. I am not going to duck out of answering his points, but I shall arrange for them to be brought to the attention of those specifically involved and my right hon. and learned Friend the new Secretary of State for Transport.

The hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conw
my hon. Friend the Member for Delyn spoke of
Lamb Enterprise. As I said yesterday at the winter
is important for the industry to support Welsh
Enterprise and for all farmers to pay the levy. I hop
the initiatives that we have announced will enable
focus in a more specific way, particularly at interna
fairs, on the quality of Welsh produce and to get acro
clear message that if one buys Welsh food and pro
one buys quality. Quality means a great deal in to
markets.

The hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth
Michael) made a series of points. I am not sure t
would be a good idea to answer all of them now, but
deal with a couple. I recently met representatives
Wales tourist board and the issue of the marina
group was raised. As the hon. Gentleman will kno
May 1989 the Wales tourist board, with the
Development Agency, set up the marina review grou
as some would prefer it to be known, the ha
redevelopment review group. It included representati
the WDA, the Countryside Commission, the N
Conservancy Council, the Sports Council for Wale
National Rivers Authority, the national park autho
the Council of Welsh Districts and the Assembly—I
that word to the hon. Member for Ceredigion
Pembroke, North—of Welsh Counties.

On reading the list of bodies involved, one might
little troubled about whether agreement would be rea
because many interests are represented. I am aware t
is proving difficult to come up with a policy th
acceptable to all the participating bodies. That is a n
for the group members. I have made the members
Wales tourist board aware that I await the outcome
group's deliberations with great interest. Obvious
would like some form of agreement to be reached.

Mr. Michael: Will the Secretary of State reassure
Does he agree that it is important for the develop
bodies to participate fully and to reconcile the intere
development, conservation and the other bodies to
he referred? I accept that perfection is difficult to ac
but the process needs all the organisations to engage
attempt to find an appropriate way forward.

Mr. Hunt: I dare say that if I were to receive a n
somewhere, it would tell me to be extremely careful
how I respond. I have planning responsibilities that I
to exercise in a quasi-judicial capacity. When w
talking about a set of strategic policy principles on m
developments in Wales, I must be careful. As I said,
matter for the group members, but I await the result
deliberations with great interest.

On social policy, I agree with several of the comm
of the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth. I
examines the purpose of a Development Board for
Wales and the Welsh Development Agency, one sees
it is vital to seek every possible way of strengthe
communities. If we allow communities to weaken, it
pressure on all the infrasture, social and otherwise. T
why social policy is important. I reassure the
Gentleman that when I consider overall policy I shall
his comments in mind.

A range of issues has been raised in the context of an important Bill that extends the limit for the Development Board for Rural Wales, and I commend its proposals to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a Second time.

Bill committed to a Committee of the whole House.—[Mr. David Hunt.]

DEVELOPMENT BOARD FOR RURAL WALES BILL *[MONEY]*

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Development Board for Rural Wales Bill, it is expedient to authorise any payment out of money provided by Parliament, the National Loans Fund or the Consolidated Fund resulting from the increase to £175 million of the limit specified in section 12 of the Development of Rural Wales Act 1976.—*[Mr. David Hunt.]*

Tobacco Products (Advertising)

11 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Stephen Dorrell): I beg to move,

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 6071/90 on the advertising of tobacco products and the supplementary explanatory memoranda submitted by the Department of Health on 19 July 1990 and 26th October 1990.

The document proposes a system of statutory regulation of tobacco advertising in the press and on poster displays. The formal proposal was set out by the Commission in a draft directive published on 26 April, the main contents of which would achieve three purposes: first, it would require, by law, that all advertisements in the press and on posters should contain a health warning; secondly, it prescribes in article 3 that the content of the advertisement should simply be a representation of the package of the tobacco product; and, thirdly, it would require, again by law, that no tobacco advertisement should appear in a publication designed for distribution to a readership of under-18s.

Since the original directive was tabled by the Commission, some amendments have been proposed, particularly to article 3, which specifies that an advertisement could take the form of only a representation of a cigarette package. The effect of the amendments were described in the supplementary explanatory memorandum dated 26 October which was issued by my noble Friend Baroness Hooper.

I should like to give the House a few more details of the revised approach, which is now proposed on an informal basis, to the type of advertisement that would be allowed under the proposed formulation. The revised draft—it is not yet an official proposal from the Commission, which is why it has not been presented formally to the House—would require that advertising should comply with the following rules: first, that it should not be aimed specifically at young people nor depicit heroes, personalities or situations likely to attract young people; secondly, it should not link the consumption of tobacco products with physical prowess; thirdly, it should not create the impression that the consumption of tobacco products contributes to social or sexual success; fourthly, it should not claim that tobacco products have therapeutic qualities or that tobacco is a stimulant, a sedative or a means of resolving personal conflicts; fifthly, it should not present abstinence or a desire to stop or moderate the consumption of tobacco products in a negative light; and, sixthly, it should not place emphasis on tar or nicotine content as being a positive quality of the product.

Those regulations would replace the requirement in the original draft that a tobacco advertisment could take the form of only a representation of the cigarette package. If the Commission tabled that alternative formulation of article 3, the revised draft directive would much more closely correspond with the approach of our voluntary code on tobacco advertising.

Mr. Peter Griffiths (Portsmouth, North): I hesitate to interrupt my hon. Friend because I am sure that we realise the significance of his points about the way in which advertising should be presented. Does he agree with me about the fundamental flaw in the original and the amended drafts? It is not so much the question of how advertising should be presented in different c the fact that it is nonsense to suggest harmo advertising when the ownership and operation companies varies from a free enterprise econo country to a Government monopoly in anothe

Mr. Dorrell: I entirely agree with my hon shall deal with that specific point later. I have de amendment to the original draft directive v expected the Commission may be willing to tabl move from a system of regulation based on des type of advertisement that is acceptable towar of describing the type of advertisement unacceptable, which more closely correspond voluntary code. To the extent that the revise article 3 brings the draft more closely into lin voluntary code, we regard it is an improve substantial objections to the Commission's remain.

The first objection to the Commission's a simple and is based on the Government's doub basis on which the Commission is introd proposal. One need not be committed to any ask, if someone wishes to impose a new oblig restrict an activity, on what legal authority that is being introduced. The Commission claim directive is being introduced on the basis of arti the treaty, which is directed towards removing trade and the completion of the internal mark

I do not believe that the Commission can maintain the argument that the directive is base 100A and can be justified on those terms. Th bogus for two reasons. First, even if the c accepted and implemented throughout the C we will not have created an internal market wit rules in force throughout the Community. Th specifically envisages the possibility of two regimes governing tobacco advertising—the po a ban in some countries and regulations that directive in others. It would not create an intern On that basis alone, the Commission's claim to directive under article 100A fails.

Secondly, one must be pragmatic and ask w Commission can justify introducing a direc article 100A to remove barriers to trade in te improvement in trade that would follow. We about a directive which is designed to remove barrier to trade in the printed word. To j approach, the Commission would have to show was an existing barrier to trade, based o advertising practices covering tobacco product

I do not believe that the Commission could that is a significant inhibition on the trade journals. The United Kingdom press circulate Italy, although there is in force in Italy a total advertising of tobacco products. It is not a inhibition of trade in the Community. Even convinced supporter of the Commission's appr recognise that by far the most important inh trade in the printed word is not different regimes, but the fact that most Community speak different languages from their neighbour think, therefore, that the Commission can proposal on the ground that it removes trade which is the only basis on which it can justify i the directive under article 100A.

I am forced to conclude that the real reason has nothing to do with removing trade barriers, and nothing to do with the substance of article 100A, but is connected with the Commission's ambitions relating to health and social policy. Let me explain why the Government do not accept its approach. First, the Commission clearly has no competence to direct any member state on issues of health and social policy: indeed, it has said explicitly that it embraces the principle that it calls subsidiarity, and recognises that health policy is properly a matter for national rather than Community decision-making. But even if we put that argument aside and consider the issue on its merits rather than the legalities, the Commission's approach to introducing statutory controls on tobacco advertising is misconceived. I believe that the evidence shows this country's voluntary arrangement to achieve health policy objectives more effectively.

One reason why our approach is more effective is that all the principles that would restrict the type of advertising that would be allowed under article 3 are already in force under our voluntary code, and we also apply additional restrictions. It would be impossible to design a statutory framework that would allow the introduction of such restrictions in the legalistic language that the statute requires. We have, for example, an agreement with the industry that poster advertising should be allowed only up to 50 per cent. of the 1980 level of spend. The industry has agreed to impose that restriction on itself; but I challenge anyone to frame it in language that would satisfy parliamentary draftsmen or, indeed, the House were it to be submitted as a legislative proposal.

In the same terms, our existing voluntary code restricts the right—that is, the industry voluntarily restricts its own right—to advertise tobacco near schools. Those are two examples of self-imposed restrictions that are not encompassed in the statutory code suggested by the Commission.

I do not want to rely entirely on assertion. Let us examine the record of the different approaches to tobacco advertising in the Community. I do not think that it is merely coincidence that the two Community countries that have achieved the biggest reduction in cigarette consumption over the period between 1975 and 1987 are two of the countries that tackle the problem with voluntary agreements. Over those 12 years, the United Kingdom experienced a 29 per cent reduction; the Netherlands, which also operates a voluntary agreement, experienced a reduction of 41 per cent.

That is the record of voluntary agreements. However, not one of the four countries of the Community which have imposed or proposed a ban on advertising or consumption recorded a fall in consumption. In all the four countries there was growth in consumption over the four years when we saw a 29 per cent. reduction and the Dutch saw one of 41 per cent. Over the same period consumption increased by 7 per cent. in Portugal, 5 per cent. in France, 8 per cent. in Italy and 11 per cent. in Spain. Track records do not support the assertion of those who suggest that the more heavy-handed legalistic approach is a more effective way of securing our health policy objectives.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Portsmouth, North (Mr. Griffiths) suggested, there is an interesting correlation between the four countries to which I have referred. Each one has imposed a ban on advertising, or proposes to do so, but each has an effective state monopoly of production. There is no local production that is not state-owned. The evidence shows that a total ban is ineffective, and the fact that such a ban is imposed or proposed only in countries where cigarette production is effectively a state monopoly must raise questions about the bona fides of the basis on which their Governments support a legalistic ban on advertising.

At the Council of Ministers meeting next Monday we shall oppose the proposals, even if they are submitted in their amended form. First, we do not believe that they can be justified as measures to liberalise trade. We do not accept that any inhibitions to trade arise from the printed word. We do not believe, therefore, that the Commission has competence to tell us, on health policy grounds, to introduce the restrictions. Leaving aside competence, we believe that the evidence demonstrates that we have been presented with an undesirable way of approaching the problem on health policy grounds.

11.18 pm

Ms. Harriet Harman (Peckham): The Minister's speech was disappointing, because it did not sound in any respect like one that should be made by a health Minister. We are, of course, dealing with an important issue of public health. The Minister said that one of the key considerations is the legal authority that the directive purports to introduce. Surely the key consideration is whether it is a good idea to restrict or even ban the advertising of tobacco. It is not one of constitutional niceties, which is what detained the Minister and concerned him throughout his speech.

The Minister referred to why other European countries support the measure and sought to pick holes in their records. I have two criticisms on that score. First, the question for us is whether it is a good idea to support the measure. Secondly, I question the relevance of relating advertising and smoking levels in a vacuum. Surely we should relate also price and health education, for example, which have an effect on the consumption of tobacco. I think that the Minister trivialised the complexity of the factors that bear on whether people smoke tobacco. It might have suited the Minister's case, but it is a pity that he began the debate on that basis.

This is not—or should not be—a party political matter. No doubt some Opposition Members disagree with our party policy on this matter and no doubt many Conservative Members who are waiting to speak will disagree with the Government's approach. The most important aspect of the directive is that it would replace the United Kingdom voluntary agreement with a legal system of controls. It does not go far enough, but it is a step in the right direction.

We need to move on from the constitutional niceties and remind ourselves of the background to the directive. The dangers of smoking have not always been known. One can go round hospitals and see people who are now terminally ill because they became addicted to smoking when tobacco was given out as part of their naval rations. One can also meet people with chronic bronchitis who remember being given a cigarette at the surgery by their general practitioner to help them to relax.

Although the dangers of smoking have not always been known, they are known now. The trouble is that public policy lags behind scientific knowledge and public opinion on this issue. Both smoking and non-smoking parents alike do not want their children to begin to smoke and 80

[Ms. Harriet Harman]

per cent. of those who currently smoke have tried to give up and would like to give up. I do not know who the Minister thinks that he is defending with his constitutional niceties except the tobacco industry——

Mr. Peter Bottomley (Eltham) *rose——*

Ms. Harman: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will be seeking to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker— *[Interruption.]* I shall give way, but it is against my better judgment.

Mr. Bottomley: The hon. Lady speaks like a lawyer, as though only things that are written down in law work. Did she hear my hon. Friend the Minister say that cigarette smoking in this country has been declining faster than in at least four other Community countries? Did she hear his example of how the voluntary agreement led to a reduction in tobacco advertising rather more quickly than is likely to be the case with the directive? We must face up to the question whether we are talking about an effective reduction in both the promotion of cigarette smoking and the levels of cigarette smoking.

Ms. Harman: Yes, I heard what the Minister said, but the only factor that he seemed to be taking into account in comparing different countries' records in reducing the consumption of tobacco was the different ways in which they dealt with advertising. But there are many other variables. Advertising is only one piece of evidence and should not be taken in isolation.

We have nothing to be complacent about. Yes, we have reduced tobacco consumption and smoking in this country, but it is still an immense public health issue, a killer and a disabler. I do not want to hear Conservative Members saying how great our record is when our national health service hospitals are full of people who are disabled and dying because of smoking. I want to hear concern and to see some action, not complacent self-congratulation and criticisms of other countries because they are not doing as well as we are.

I should like to illustrate the way in which the scientific evidence has built up. A turning point came in 1962 when the Royal College of Physicians published its "Smoking and Health" report which, for the first time, surveyed the evidence. Its second report, "Smoking and Health Now", was published in 1971. In 1976 Professor Sir Richard Doll and Mr. Richard Peto published the results of their 20-year study of nearly 35,000 doctors' smoking habits. One of their major conclusions was that one in every three smokers will die as a direct result of smoking.

I hope that the Minister will bear with me as I run through the evidence; as he failed to put on the record the seriousness of the issue, I feel that I must do so, despite the lateness of the hour. In 1977, the third report of the Royal College of Physicians was entitled "Smoking or Health". It had become clear that one could either smoke or be healthy. The fourth report of the Royal College of Physicians, "Health or Smoking", introduced the question of coronary heart disease-related deaths and smoking, and stated that 20 per cent. of coronary heart disease deaths were related to smoking. In 1988 the fourth report of the Independent Scientific Committee on Smoking and Health —the Froggatt report—raised the question of passive smoking—people whose health suffered not because they were smokers themselves but because t
people's smoke. It said that several hun
annual total of lung cancer deaths in the
could be attributed to passive smoking

The roll call of death and disability
to see. I suggest that all hon. Membe
oppose my view that the Government sh
indeed, strengthen the directive should g
hospitals. They should go into wards
premature babies who are under wei
mothers have smoked, bronchial wards
an oxygen mask over their face becaus
breathe, wards where people have had h
people are waiting for the amputation
having had the first leg amputated alre
circulation problems caused by smokin
should go to their local hospitals and see
done. Then they should not rule out a
help in the war against tobacco.

I shall run through the roll call of de
in this country as a result of smoking
people die prematurely every year from
smoking. That is 300 every day. Smok
about 50 million working days a year
75,000 people each year have heart a
smoking. Some 320,000 people a year c
about angina. Around 25 per cent. of t
caused by smoking. That is 80,000 peopl
by-pass operations performed each
attributable to smoking. The total nu
cancer cases in the United Kingdom in
which figures are available was 30,345. A
of lung cancer cases were caused by
27,310 new cases of lung cancer attribu
There is also the incidence of cancer of

The most recent figures for amput
5,780 amputations were performed, of
due to peripheral vascular disease. Me
accepts that 90 per cent. of peripheral
caused by smoking. It is an individua
person whose health suffers in that wa
tragedy for the national health service b
on its resources and represents a fail
health policy. As I said, I went round
while ago with a consultant. He recko
per cent. of all the beds in the hospital
people with smoking-related diseases
position.

Of course, advertising controls are
which affects the rate of smoking in any
others. The Government have dragged
the medical evidence and public opi
advertising but health warnings, tax
policy on children and smoking. The i
one can distinguish between magazines
children and those directed at adults
household one can see an issue of *Fas*
other children's magazine containing
Against Tobacco" anti-smoking messag
table, written in equally accessible langu
or another magazine which is likel
advertisement for cigarettes.

Mr. Dorrell: Is the hon. Lady saying that she is against the proposition that we should treat magazines directed at children as a special risk requiring special controls over and above the controls on the printed word generally?

Ms. Harman: No.

Mr. Dorrell: That is what she is saying.

Ms. Harman: Before the Minister jumps to conclusions about my answer, he should listen to me. This is a serious issue. I am saying that we should have a ban on tobacco advertising in all magazines. I accept, of course, that if one allows such advertising in magazines, it should at least be exempt from children's magazines. That solution, however, does not go far enough.

No cigarette advertising has been allowed on British television since 1965, yet 64 per cent. of children aged between nine and 15 claim to have seen such advertising on television. They are, of course, referring to sporting events and competitions that are sponsored by tobacco companies. Such sponsorship should cease.

Toy cars sold on street stalls have Marlboro written all over them. They are an exact replica of a sports car, a car which a child will recognise from television coverage. A child will play with such a toy and come to recognise the logo on the cigarette packet.

The tobacco industry spends more than £100 million a year on advertising alone, which does not include the sponsorship of sporting events, but such sponsorship is also advertising. Why else would the tobacco industry provide it? It does not do so out of the goodness of its heart, but because it knows that that sponsorship sells cigarettes. The Government spend about £5 million a year on anti-smoking education. It is ludicrous that the Government should spend taxpayers' money on such education while allowing the tobacco industry to spend £100 million on advertising.

All the leading national and international medical and health organisations that have studied the problem of smoking have called for a total ban, enforced through legislation, on the promotion of tobacco. I support that. Tobacco advertising undermines national, public health education—of course it does. The health education authorities recognise that.

It is important to cut out all tobacco advertising and promotion, because it influences people to smoke. The tobacco industry would not spend such large sums of money if that was not the end effect. Tobacco advertising is also one of the factors behind the uptake of smoking by children.

To allow advertisements for a product that kills one in four of its users is unethical. We now know about the death toll and therefore we have a moral obligation to ban tobacco advertising. Moreover, to promote the use of a product that has proved to be harmful to non-users as well as users is absolutely unjustifiable.

I am disappointed that the Under-Secretary has reiterated the point made by his colleague in the Department who said:

"The UK Government continues to believe that the best way to control tobacco advertising is by means of voluntary agreements."

What absolute nonsense. The evidence produced by the Under-Secretary is bogus, paper thin and designed to suit his case. No one agrees with him except the tobacco industry. He should appreciate that his stand is opposite to that held by all public health organisations, including World Health Organisation, the medical profession health educators. He has some support, however—tha the tobacco industry. It is a sad day when a Mini responsible for health argues the case for that indus

Voluntary agreements have been abused by the toba industry and, by their very nature, they are subject to element of negotiation. The industry will never ag voluntarily to restrictions that would put it out of busin It will never agree to anything that seriously threatens sales. The Government go along with that, which irresponsible.

The scale of the tobacco problem and the determinat of the industry mean that we must have a tobacco con policy that is comprehensive and implemented legislation, not by negotiated voluntary agreements, are committed to that and urge that commitment on Government.

We also want a ban on tobacco advertising, the end of sports sponsorship by tobacco companies, promotion of wider use of non-smoking restrictions public places and the creation of a new right to smoke-free environment at work. There is strong evide from the past three decades that the single largest factor any variation in the consumption of tobacco is a change its real price, and the most powerful contribution reducing consumption would be a real increase in exc duty. Conversely, a fall in the value of excise duty is lia to undo any achievement in health education. The Briti Medical Association has been critical of the Governmen policy on tobacco, under which, although the excise du rose during the early 1980s, it has fallen 9 per cent. sin 1986 and is now about the same level as in the mid-196

Although we are discussing only one part of t problem of smoking—advertising—the next time that t Minister comes to the House he must give us a sense th the Department of Health has an anti-smoking strateg complete with target, and he wants to use advertising one of the weapons in that strategy. He must take t problem more seriously. It is no good wishing that peop would not smoke; we must have targets for a reduction smoking. Just as we must have defence indust diversification to save jobs, we must have tobacco indust diversification. We want not just to reduce the menace smoking, but totally eliminate it.

11.36 pm

Mr. Peter Griffiths (Portsmouth, North): I congratula my hon. Friend the Minister on his excellent exposition the Government's view. I am sorry that I interrupted hi because had I not done so he might have been even mo effective in putting forward the case, which complete demolished everything that the hon. Member for Peckha (Ms. Harman) had prepared to say. I do not know how th hon. Lady can call the official figures which the Minist gave bogus. If they were bogus, that would be a seriou matter, but they were obviously not bogus—the word tha the hon. Lady used. They simply did not accord with he previously held prejudices, and so she dismissed them.

The sweeping statement with which the hon. Lad opened her speech, by saying that we were discussing health matter, was also misleading. It is not only a healt matter, but an employment matter and, most of all, matter of political and legal freedom. We are decidin whether a directive from Europe is justified, whether

[Mr. Peter Griffiths]

would be effective if it were justified and, even if it were effective if it were justified and, even if it were effective, whether the difficulties involved would make it worth while for Her Majesty's Government to accept the principle.

As the report clearly shows, we would need legislation to deal with the directive, and the moment we have legislation we lose the tobacco industry's voluntary co-operation. I am a non-smoker and so I have no remit for the tobacco industry, but I believe that we have something in this country that is extremely valuable—a dialogue and an agreement with the tobacco industry, which has shown itself able to respond to changed circumstances. The moment we introduce a rigid legislative framework, the tobacco industry, like any other industry faced with legislation, will operate closely and exactly within the parameters of the legislation.

Is the hon. Lady really suggesting that whenever circumstances change or there is a new idea in marketing we should change the legislation by taking it through the House? That would be hopelessly time-consuming and we would always be trailing after the event. The advantage of a voluntary agreement is flexibility, so that if a new situation arises the matter can be discussed.

I do not want to take up the hon. Lady's arguments about the merits of advertising or sponsorship, which are for another occasion. However, I emphasise what I said in my intervention, that it is unreasonable for countries that operate a state monopoly on tobacco products to seek to restrict the advertising system in countries that have a free market economy. The purpose of advertising in such an economy is entirely different from methods of promotion in countries with a state monopoly where there is probably no need for any advertising, even if the state were prepared to accept it.

Mr. Dorrell: The situation is even worse than my hon. Friend suggests. There must be a suspicion that the purpose of the advertising ban in the four countries that have a state monopoly on production is to keep out foreign competition.

Mr. Griffiths: My hon. Friend's comment is the key to the argument. We are debating the merits not of tobacco advertising but of a legislative framework instead of a voluntary agreement. It would be to our disadvantage to give up the good will between the Government and the tobacco industry by seeking to restrict sales to vulnerable groups. Such groups have a choice, but they need to be protected, especially at certain times such as during childhood.

No one is calling for advertising to be extended. In some countries there is an absolute ban on advertising while in others agreements such as ours with the tobacco industry might be more liberal. The directive's proposals do not go as far as some of our existing agreements. The directive contains no provision for a halfway stage because it seeks a total ban. We need to examine that carefully before reaching a decision on the issue. It is vital that we do not weaken our regime. I emphasise that I have no wish to see increased market penetration of cigarettes, and I certainly do not wish them to be sold to children or vulnerable people. The most effective way to deal with the problem is by devising a carefully pla agreement with the tobacco industry t to meet changing circumstances.

11.48 pm

Mr. Peter Bottomley (Eltham): I r tobacco on one side because it migl Waugh if I started to criticise smokers engage in drink driving. The last time at *The Spectator* parliamentarian of years ago. That lunch was held to invited, so I might be forgiven one sm I do so partly because the European learn to pursue effective matters and mightily provoked by the speech of t Peckham (Ms. Harman).

The hon. Lady constantly used th accompanied in the Chamber by a W not seem to be a great deal of in Opposition Members. Perhaps she th not be trusted to speak by herself Friends knew the sort of speech tha likely to make. I am surprised at the a Democrats.

I agree with the hon. Member for a serious health problem. The conse are appalling. It appals me even mo growth in smoking is among women. that advertising has been aimed speci has not—but that there is a false soph some of the hon. Lady's false argume to believe that smoking calms them do is supposed to calm people down, or other reasons to take up smoking.

People smoke for the same reason —it is socially acceptable. If we seri cutting the amount of tobacco that i realise that we shall not achieve t approach. It does not work. I do not place for the law, and I should no producers always to do the right thi That is not the way that life works. Bu Lady to bring in some facts occasio bringing in assertions, and when we issues she brings in individuals, effectively. That does not work when a further dramatic improvement in p

The European Commission must happening in the different countries what partnership is about.

I should like to see league tables groups, and how their smoking ha decreasing. That would provide a p would start to draw the attention of the fact that they are addicted. Most when they realise that they are addi think that they can give up whenev shall have to squeeze the tobacco sponsoring sport, and the sooner we that, the better. It will happen far fa we rely on directives.

My hon. Friend the Minister, in effective speeches, mentioned the matters. If monopoly suppliers of t out competition, it is unlikely to be

sell fewer products. If the Labour party has not learnt that monopoly socialism should have gone out over the period when my right hon. Friend the Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher) was Prime Minister, it has not learnt much. The socialist Government of Spain has learnt far more from what Britain has done in the past 10 years than the hon. Member for Peckham has.

I hope that the Commission will start looking at the figures. Has it provided a league table of the amount of smoking per head in each country, or of the amount that smoking has dropped in each country? Has it learnt the lessons from the anti-drink-driving campaign in this country? I do not mind being associated with the reduction in road casualties for the rest of my parliamentary service. I remind the House of what we did. In 1986, we discovered that an estimated 2 million times a week, men drove after drinking above the legal limit. After two and a half years, that figure fell to 600,000. There had been a two thirds reduction with no change in the law, sentencing or enforcement and with a reduction in the amount of Government-funded advertising.

The change in the consumption of tobacco will not be so easy, because at least the drink suppliers were able to provide non-alcohol beers and low-alcohol beers. Sales of those went up from about £15 million a year to £250 million a year. That is worthwhile. It is important to monitor and find out how social groups are behaving, and we can move further on that.

Ms. Harman: I have all that information.

Mr. Bottomley: The hon. Lady did not use it. She asserted that what other countries have done, which appears to be worse than what we have done, should be substituted for our approach, which appears to have worked. She is right to emphasise that most people are not aware of the consequences of tobacco smoking.

We should devote the time that would otherwise be directed to debating the competence of the European Commission in this sector—it is fairly well established that it does not have competence—and whether, if it did have the competence, its approach was the right one, and it is clear that it is not, to raising the consciousness of people, especially those among whom tobacco consumption is rising, and the women who look to the hon. Lady as an example, or a role model. She should work with us in the non-political way for which she has asked to get those people to realise that smoking is a menace to society. Giving up smoking means that it will not kill. It sets children a good example. If parents do not want their children to smoke, the best thing is for parents not to smoke. That is the way to make dramatic progress.

In four or five years' time, experts from the Commission and other European countries may come to see how we have achieved better progress by ourselves in a way that can be copied by others. I hope that we will also have the humility to go to the other countries that have done better than us, such as the Netherlands, and find out what we can from them. That would be a far more effective process. It is likely to empty some of the hospital beds and reduce family distress rather faster than relying on a legalistic approach.

11.50 pm

Mr. Alan Amos (Hexham): The proposed directive is expected to enshrine into United Kingdom law the current voluntary agreement with the tobacco industry, or at least to enshrine some parts of that voluntary agreement. That so-called agreement is an embarrassment, having been put together by the Department of health and the tobacco industry behind closed doors in smoke-filled rooms.

It is only the industry and, almost apologetically, people in the Department of Health, who defend this method of controlling tobacco advertising as being effective. There are numerous examples of how the tobacco industry is able to bypass that agreement. We have only to look around us—in newspapers and on billboards—to see the portrayal of smoking as everything from macho and virile to chic and sophisticated. The image of the Marlboro cowboy is not dead.

As I understand it, the proposal would make it a matter of legislation that cigarette advertisements could not appeal to the young and link smoking with physical prowess or sex, or claim therapeutic qualities for smoking. The thought that those things could end up as matters for courts to decide—whether an advertisement for Marlboro that shows a black-clad, gun-toting motor cycle cop, astride his machine, a real example, suggests that smokers have more physical prowess—seems a long drawn-out nightmare. I am advised that the courts would not touch it and certainly would not wish to judge on such matters.

Even in the case of less clear breaches of the spirit of the rules, it is anathema for the Government to be officially blessing advertisements that present witty, clever images of smoking, the kind of images that win marketing awards for being so compelling. After all, images are what tobacco companies are all about. Tobacco companies are not selling smoking, they are selling an image of smoking. In enshrining the voluntary agreement in legislation, the Government would in effect be saying that it is legitimate to use such clever images.

The idea of putting the agreement into United Kingdom law would, therefore, only perpetuate an already discredited agreement with the tobacco industry. In fact, the directive itself is seriously flawed and, if introduced, would create a legislative limbo for tobacco advertising. In short, it would be bad law and it is extremely doubtful whether any court would be prepared to spend valuable time arguing whether the industry had broken the law.

The United Kingdom Government would therefore be entirely right to oppose the new directive, as other countries, such as Germany, and possibly the Netherlands, intend to do. I can quite understand the argument that any legislation on advertising is better than nothing at all because it breaks the mould of the voluntary agreement and makes further legislation—that is, a total ban—easier, and a total ban is something that all reasonable people must want, aim and work for.

However, there is no certainty that the current version of the European advertising proposal would bring the United Kingdom closer to a ban. Certainly, if it is bad law, as I believe it is, it would make a total ban more difficult and would enable the tobacco industry to say that it is difficult to enforce the law that we have, so we cannot dream of extending the law to a total ban. I would not want to give the tobacco industry another argument for doing nothing.

[Mr. Alan Amos]

The directive is intended to control permitted advertising, but, as I have said, in reality such a law would not be enforceable. The only real solution—I am sure you will agree Mr. Deputy Speaker, because you are a very reasonable man—is to do what the Royal College of Physicians, the British Medical Association and other medical authorities have called for—to end all forms of tobacco promotion.

A recent survey of the United Kingdom's top 300 advertisers found that even they were in favour of a total ban on tobacco advertising—62 per cent. agreed with that proposition. Such a ban must embrace not only the advertising we see in print and on billboards but the more pernicious promotion of tobacco through sports sponsorship.

Just how pernicious it is was shown recently by the publication of a report on tobacco sponsorship of televised sport by the Health Education Authority, "Beating the Ban: Tobacco advertisements on BBC TV—A threat to our children's future health," which I recommend every right hon. and hon. Member to read. The HEA is not a shady organisation but is part of a Government Department.

That report found that, although cigarette advertising on television has been banned since 1965, 64 per cent. of children between the ages of nine and 15 claimed to have seen cigarette advertising on television. They had, in fact, seen sports events sponsored by tobacco companies—cricket, snooker, motor racing, tennis, and so on. Surprisingly, all that coverage is on BBC television. In 1987, ITV companies formally decided not to televise tobacco-sponsored sporting events.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I draw my hon. Friend's attention to the fact that only on BBC can those selling drink associate their alcohol with motor racing. I hope that those who read the report of this debate for the BBC will realise that the corporation ought to obey its guidelines—and certainly do nothing worse than ITV allows to advertisers.

Mr. Amos: My hon. Friend makes a very valid point. The HEA report concludes:

"The BBCTV coverage of tobacco-sponsored sport appears to be in breach of the letter or the spirit of the 1987 Voluntary Agreement or exploits defects in the Agreement."

It cites three apparent breaches on the agreement, and adds:

"These apparent breaches should be investigated by the Monitoring Committee and appropriate action taken."

It details another six breaches of the voluntary agreement, and remarks:

"Action should be taken by the Monitoring Committee to review these apparent defects. The BBC and the European Broadcasting Union should be asked to examine these matters, to avoid broadcasting channels being used to promote tobacco."

Most damning of all is this conclusion:

"The extent of broadcasting of tobacco promotion images appears to be increasing and needs to be curtailed in the interests of health. The impression remains that the tobacco companies effectively control the televising of these programmes, whose aim appears to be to use BBC airtime to sell cigarettes."

That goes to show how useless and irrelevant is COMATAS, the committee that is supposed to monitor tobacco advertising and sponsorship, but half of whose members are from the tobacco industry itself, and without whose permission no report may be published and nothing done. The committee is useless anyway, because the agreement is voluntary and the committee does not have to do anything about breaches of it—and does not. We need to redress the balance in favour of health. The tobacco companies have had it all their own way for far too long. How can we possibly hope to compete when the tobacco industry spends an estimated £117 million each year on direct advertising alone in promoting its deadly products, when all the Government spend on anti-smoking health education is a total of £5 million. We must follow the lead of our colleagues in Europe and throughout the world and go further than the proposed directive, by banning all forms of tobacco promotion.

So often people say that it cannot be done. Of course it can—it is done in the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. We can also do it, if we are really serious about preventing 100,000 deaths each year, and saving more than £500 million of needless expenditure on NHS treatment.

I can do no better than to quote from the chairman of the Health Education Authority who was talking about the tobacco companies sponsorship of sporting events:

"The time has come to close this loophole in the regulatory machinery the Government has set up to protect children from tobacco promotion. This anomaly is damaging the Government's own laudable efforts to tackle the serious issue of children's smoking."

He goes on to mention the number of children who smoke, and says:

"there are disturbing signs that an earlier decline in smoking among children is not being maintained. This is why the Government, through the Health Education Authority, has just launched a five year programme to help children resist the pressures to smoke.

This programme is undermined by the promotion of cigarettes on the most powerful medium to which children are exposed. In surveys of children's attitudes to smoking, the sponsorship of sports and other events by cigarette companies is cited as evidence that the Government is not seriously concerned about the problem of smoking. 'If they really want to make us realise smoking is dangerous, why do they allow all this sponsorship' is a typical comment.

Children see things straight. We should be straight with them."

Please, let us be honest and go for a total ban. We can argue whether it is within the competence of Europe. We can have a ban without diktat from Europe. Whether this is the right directive to do it is a debating point. If we want a ban we could have a ban. We know the dangers of smoking. We know that people are influenced by advertising. That is why the industry goes in for so much sponsorship.

I sincerely believe that it is a great tragedy that we know the effects of smoking, but we are not doing enough to stop it. I urge my hon. Friend please to do something about it.

12.2 am

Mr. Dorrell: My hon. Friend the Member for Hexham (Mr. Amos) is quite right to say that if we want a total ban we can have one, and I shall return to that issue later in my summary of the debate.

I think that there are probably two things that my hon. Friend the Member for Portsmouth, North (Mr. Griffiths), the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) and I have in common. The first is that I suspect that all three of us are non smokers. Certainly, anyone who comes to see me in my office in the Department of Health will not be offered an ashtray. I have to tell my hon. Friend the Member for

Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) that that is simply because I do not like the smell of cigarette smoke in my office, and if it is my office, I think that I am entitled to determine what the atmosphere is like.

Ms. Harman: That is power.

Mr. Dorrell: Yes, that is right.

The second thing that we have in common is that I think that we all agree that the substance of this directive is a health matter. Therefore, it is not anything to do with the removal of barriers to trade around the Community, as the Commission is seeking to argue. It seems to me that the House has united on that this evening. It is clear that this is a health matter, which should be considered on health grounds. It has nothing whatever to do with alleged barriers to trade. The House accepted without demur that this is a matter to be determined here, and not as a result of leadership by the European Commission. In my view, it is clearly outside the competence of the Community. It is a domestic matter, which should be decided here and has nothing to do with article 100A of the treaty of Rome. The House has demonstrated unity on that view.

Mr. Bottomley: Our hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) usually raises the question of competence and he is not in the Chamber. Is that the reason for unity?

Mr. Dorrell: I shall delight in pointing out to my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) that, even in his absence, we were able to agree on that aspect of this evening's debate.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Perhaps he is waiting by his phone.

Mr. Dorrell: It might be a long wait.

Having established that it was a health matter, the hon. Member for Peckham went on to ask whether it was a good idea. It must have been a rhetorical question, because she answered it by saying, "Of course it is." The difficulty with that is that it is merely assertion, not argument. With respect, she did not address the facts. The facts, as I sought to present them to the House, are that cigarette consumption has fallen in countries that operate voluntary agreements on the model that I have sought to defend, and the countries that rely on legislative restrictions have done less well than we have. The countries that have done least well are those relying on a total ban. One has to approach this on the basis of the evidence. If one of our public health objectives is to reduce cigarette consumption, is not it relevant to look at the experience of different Community countries? If cigarette consumption has fallen fastest—as is the case—in countries that have observed voluntary agreements and has risen in countries that have or propose a total ban, should not that at least inform our debate?

Mr. Amos: Is my hon. Friend saying that where there is no advertising of tobacco products people are more likely to smoke and that where there is advertising under a voluntary agreement they are less likely to smoke? That is the logic of what he is saying.

Mr. Dorrell: I am quoting the experience of member states. In every country that has or proposes a total ban on cigarette advertising, cigarette consumption has risen. In countries that have a voluntary code on cigarette advertising, consumption has fallen by a significant margin. The House should bear that in mind when it addresses this issue.

My hon. Friend the Member for Portsmouth, North suggested that a voluntary agreement is preferable to a legislative framework of restriction on cigarette and tobacco advertising. As he rightly said, a voluntary agreement is, by its nature, more flexible. It makes it easier to insist that those who are governed by it observe the spirit rather than purely the legal letter of it. Perhaps even more significantly, as he said, it puts the onus much more on the industry to satisfy itself that it is observing the spirit of the agreement that it has signed rather than believing that if it merely satisfies the letter of the agreement it has discharged its social obligation. Although one or two hon. Members have sought to suggest that the voluntary code has not been fully observed, the committee set up to monitor the code has expressed itself satisfied that, by and large, the conditions are being observed.

My hon. Friend the Member for Portsmouth, North also rightly pointed out that we should remember that the countries in the Community that have or proposed a total ban on cigarette advertising are the countries that have a state production monopoly. Four countries have or propose a ban and the same four countries have a state production monopoly. We should not simply dismiss that as a coincidence.

My hon. Friend the Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley) said that we should take seriously the public health objective of reducing cigarette consumption. He rightly pointed out that it is a women's health issue as well as a general public health issue because cigarette consumption is particularly concentrated in the female population. My hon. Friend is right to bring that fact to the House's attention. The Government take seriously the public health objective of reducing cigarette and tobacco consumption and the number of unnecessary deaths caused by it. We take seriously the need to draw to the attention of anyone contemplating using tobacco the health hazard that any smoker runs. That is an entirely legitimate objective of a Government in a free society. If we set ourselves an objective, we must surely require that we take effective action to meet it, not action that satisfies an untested assertion.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hexham (Mr. Amos) at least agreed with me that if the directive were accepted it would lead to bad and unenforceable law. He was therefore with me in opposing the directive at the Council of Ministers meeting next week. I am grateful for his support on that.

My hon. Friend argued the case for a total ban on cigarette advertising, which I do not accept. Evidence suggests that such a ban is not effective in reducing cigarette consumption and a total ban on advertising and sports sponsorship would lead to an ever more ingenious system of evasion and of bringing the brand names of cigarettes and smoking products into the public arena. It would not achieve the purpose of denying producers of smoking products access to brand recognition. If that is my hon. Friend's purpose, he cannot design a legislative ban that would achieve it.

I emphasise that the Government accept that public health education is a proper responsibility of a Government in a modern society. We take that seriously and we shall take the effective steps necessary to discharge it. In the context of tobacco advertising, that obligation is

[Mr. Dorrell]

best discharged by a voluntary approach that limits the scale of tobaco advertising to an acceptable minimum. That is the approach that we have adopted and will continue to adopt, which is why we shall oppose the directive in the Council of Ministers next Monday.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 6071/90 on the advertising of tobacco products and the supplementary explanatory memoranda submitted by the Department of Health on 19th July 1990 and 26th October 1990.

WELSH GRAND COMMITTEE

Ordered,

That during the proceedings on the Matter of Education and Training in Wales, the Welsh Grand Committee have leave to sit twice on the first day on which it shall meet, and that, notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 88 (Meeting of standing committees), the second such sitting shall not commence before Four o'clock nor continue after the Committee has considered the matter for two hours at that sitting.—*[Mr. Patnick.]*

PETITION

Lowdham Grange

12.12 am

Mr. Andy Stewart (Sherwood): I wish to present a petition,

To the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled. The Humble Petition of

4,300 residents of Nottingham and the Sherwood constituency

Sheweth

That the Prison Department propose to close part of the prison estate at Lowdham, Namely Lowdham Grange. Wherefore, your Petitioners pray that your honourable House hold an enquiry into our case against closure.

To lie upon the Table.

NHS Industrial Tribunals

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Patnick.]*

12.13 am

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Industrial tribunals were originally set up to provide a procedure that was easily accessible, informal, speedy and inexpensive. In short, they are meant to provide cheap and easily understandable justice for workers wronged by employers. Unfortunately, the Government seem to have decided to run them down and to deny working people that justice.

Last year, applications to industrial tribunals increased by 10 per cent. This year, the increase is 32 per cent. That is not surprising, and it must be remembered that the vast majority of cases involve unfair dismissal claims—workers seeking compensation for dismissal or pursuing an employer for wages and redundancy money owed. A minority of cases concern sex or race discrimination and claims for equal pay. Thus it is hardly surprising that, as we enter a recession caused by the Government's economic incompetence, the caseloads should increase.

Why, in the light of that increased demand, did the Government set this year's budget allocation on the entirely unrealistic assumption that applications for cases would remain constant? Indeed, the Government's Employment Act 1990 creates the likelihood of some complex new claims arising out of the new law on refusal of employment on the grounds of union or non-union membership. It therefore clearly follows that, because of their own legislation, the Government are likely to have increased caseloads, yet they have allocated only a 3 per cent. increase in funding for the year. It is a familiar story of Government funding taking no account of demand for the service.

As a result of these inadequate allocations, the president of the industrial tribunals, Judge Sir David West-Russell, recently instructed regions which had overspent—that is all of them, except Nottingham—not to use part-time chairmen except in an emergency. As 40 per cent. of all cases are heard by part-time chairmen, we therefore face the prospect of a large backlog building up and those workers seeking justice facing the prospect of lengthy waits before their case is even taken to a first hearing.

Backlogs are currently worse in some areas than others. For example, although in my area there are currently few problems, in Southampton there has been a 40 per cent. reduction in workload which is expected to result in backlogs of six to 12 months for cases awaiting a first hearing. This horrendous prospect of delay will face the north-west region—my region—in due course, as it now faces Southampton. It will not be long before hon. Members throughout the north-west of England will begin to pick up cases and have to make representations to Government. It is merely a matter of time. How can the Minister reconcile the Government's action with the target set by the Department of Employment that 60 per cent. of applications should be heard within 12 weeks?

As you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am sponsored by the Confederation of Health Service Employees, and I should make it clear that I receive no payments from the union, nor do I receive any out-of-pocket expenses. My union is extremely worried about these developments.

Let me give two examples involving health service workers who have been badly affected by the Government's penny-pinching. Enderby *v.* Frenchay health authority and the Secretary of State for Social Services is an equal value claim involving speech therapists. It commenced in February 1986. The case had made its way to the employment appeals tribunal by February 1989, where it has been held up, despite appeals by my hon. Friend the Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson) and the solicitors involved. Both were told that the delay was caused by insufficient funding of the employment appeals tribunal. Indeed, I am told that a delay of 15 to 18 months on appeal to the tribunal is not uncommon.

The other case concerns race discrimination. What has happened here will, I suspect, be an all-too-familiar story unless the Government fund the industrial tribunals adequately. This case was lodged with the London North industrial tribunal in April 1990 and listed for hearing in October. The night before the hearing the regional office of the industrial tribunals sent the following letter:

"I apologise for the late cancellation of your case. I write to explain the position.

In this Region there is now unavoidable delay between the time that the Originating Application is received and the date of hearing. There are two main reasons for this:

(1) In its budget for the current year the Region has insufficient funds to set up enough Tribunals to deal with the cases which are ready for hearing; in particular, I have been formally directed to restrict the use of part-time Chairmen. Therefore I have to limit the number of cases listed for hearing on any particular day to a number which can be dealt with by the full-time Chairmen but allowing for the possibility of pre-hearing settlements.

(2) There has been an increase in the number of applications to the Tribunals without a corresponding increase in funds for additional administrative staff to deal with the added workload. Therefore it takes longer for cases to be made ready for hearing.

(3) In addition to the problem of delay, it is sometimes necessary to cancel listed cases at very short notice. This occurs when there are fewer pre-hearing settlements than expected, and there is no Tribunal available to hear the case. In those circumstances, because of lack of funds, I cannot arrange for a part-time Chairman and additional Members to hear it . . . I apologise to the parties for the delay and inconvenience caused to them. You will understand that the circumstances are wholly beyond my control."

I wonder how the Minister can justify the sending of such correspondence. It is clearly an invasion of civil liberties. He may care to refer to that case when he replies, although I was not able to give him notice of it when I spoke to him today.

The TUC was also extremely worried about the underfunding of tribunals and made representations to the Secretary of State for Employment. Even he admitted that there was a problem, and allocated an extra £500,000 this year. However, the president of the Industrial Tribunals for England and Wales, Judge Sir David West-Russell, expressed the view that £500,000 was inadequate. On 19 October, he wrote to Norman Willis, general secretary of the TUC:

"I was naturally pleased that the Employment Department has been able to allocate an additional £500,000 to the Tribunal budget although this must be set against an overspend of £375,000 during the first six months of the current financial year. I am advised by the Secretary of Tribunals that, in the circumstances, we shall need more than this amount if we are to function normally for the remainder of the year. I am therefore continuing to press the Department for further funds in order to ensure that the resumption of full listing procedures can be maintained on a permanent basis."

The question is, will the Government respond positively to such pleas as

"we shall need more than this amount if we are to function normally for the remainder of the year"?

In another letter to Norman Willis, the Secretary of State for Employment also raised the problem. Replying to a letter from Mr. Willis, he wrote:

"The fact is that unlimited funds do not exist for the industrial tribunals any more than they do for any other activity financed by the public purse. That is why the President of the Industrial Tribunals in England and Wales, as a temporary measure, has asked regions which are overspent against their budget to use part-time chairmen for emergency cover only. It is inevitable that for the time being some people may have to wait a little longer for their cases to be heard. Of course I regret this. However, this temporary inconvenience must be set against the paramount need to control public expenditure across the board, which is a prime objective of Government. If we did not succeed in this, the consequences for the economy, and therefore for every one of us, would be very much more serious."

That letter contains an admission that delays exist—a letter in the hand of the Secretary of State. It is all very well for him to view such delays as unfortunate. For the individual workers involved, they can be disastrous. First, the wait is not "a little longer", as the Secretary of State has claimed; in some cases it is a year, 18 months or even longer. Moreover, the delays are likely to worsen without adequate funding of the tribunals. Secondly, in a case of unfair dismissal, a longer delay between dismissal and the hearing will reduce even the slim chance that reinstatement can be won and leave the victim without a job and any compensation, or the prospect of receiving any compensation within a sensible period.

Mr. M. A. Rick, the regional chairman of the Southampton tribunal, is of the opinion that delays will lead to higher awards because tribunals will have direct evidence of financial loss between dismissal and the tribunal's decision when it is finally made. That could lead to longer hearings as arguments about what mitigating steps applicants have taken will become more frequent and more complex. We have moved a long way from the quick and cheap justice that the tribunal system was established to provide.

I shall suggest where the necessary extra funds could be found. Last year, 31,956 people applied to industrial tribunals, and the budget was £9·92 million. In the same period, a mere 324 people contacted the so-called Commissioner for the Rights of Trade Union Members, whose job is to advise trade union members on how to sue their unions. I am sure that the Minister played a notable part in advancing arguments and impressing upon the Government the need to set up that organisation, judging by his reputation.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Eric Forth): The hon. Gentleman is besmirching me.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Hardly.

Only 70 per cent. of the 324 cases were relevant to the commissioner's duties and only one case ended up in court. The Government allocated £1·3 million to that office and the commissioner managed to spend only one fifth of that sum. Yet the same allocation has been made for this financial year. It is clear that a great deal of money is being wasted in that area. Some even argue that the organisation

[Mr. Campbell-Savours]

has no work and that valid cases are not coming forward. It seems that malcontents and troublemakers are wasting taxpayers' money. Perhaps it is a matter that the National Audit Office should be asked to examine. Even the Public Accounts Committee might wish to undertake an inquiry. It seems that the demand for industrial tribunals far outweighs the almost completely unused and unwanted service of the so-called commissioner. I suggest to the commissioner that she should shut up shop. Why do not the Government abolish the pointless office and use the considerable sum saved to ease the funding crisis that faces industrial tribunals? Is it the Government's priority to spend their time bashing campaigning unions which wish to defend the rights of their members while cutting the funds of tribunals that the same trade unions want to use in the defence of their memberships?

The Secretary of State defended the proposed introduction of pre-hearing reviews and deposit orders following the expression of concern of the TUC's general secretary in his letter to the right hon. Gentleman. The Secretary of State explained that the proposals were designed to

"weed out ill-founded cases."

There must be a genuine concern, however, that the system would place an unreasonable element of doubt in the minds of any applicants who felt worried about their chances before a tribunal. It could even discourage them from making use of a tribunal regardless of the merits of their case.

What comments does the Minister have about that? If consistency in government is the name of the game, can he explain, given the failure rate of the Commissioner for the Rights of Trade Union Members, why the system of deposit orders is not extended to those who attempt to take cases against their own unions? Surely such orders should apply to both or neither. These are important issues in the classless society that the new Prime Minister believes that he can create before the end of the century. Natural justice must surely be of paramount importance.

12.29 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Eric Forth): I am grateful to the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) for raising this important matter. I share the concern that he expressed about recent delays in industrial tribunal hearings. I welcome the opportunity to make it clear that the Government have taken steps to ensure that the industrial tribunals can continue to operate effectively and that delays are kept to a minimum.

It is obviously in the interests of all concerned—applicant, respondent and tribunal itself—for cases to come to a hearing quickly. That is why, as the hon. Gentleman said, the tribunals have as their target that 60 per cent. of cases should come to a first hearing within 12 weeks of the original application. The hon. Gentleman will recognise that this target represents a much faster performance than the ordinary courts normally achieve. That is why the industrial tribunals are so helpful in sorting out individual industrial relations problems. They can and do produce a quick solution to a problem which is usually acceptable to both parties. I pay tribute t work, day in, day out, in quietly sorting out proble avoiding damaging disputes.

Perhaps I could now sketch in the background recent problems which the hon. Gentleman has raised. They arose because of the great and unex surge in the number of applications to industrial tri in England and Wales over the past 12 months or s not want to get bogged down in statistics, but I mu a few figures to illustrate the problem that we face

From 1981 up to the 1988-89 financial year, the n of applications fell in every year except one. In 198 were just over 40,000 applications. In the financi 1987-88, there were fewer than 27,000 and in the fol year the number of applications fell still further to ju 26,000. In other words, there was a significar sustained long-term downward trend. Some reduction, but by no means all, was, of course, due fact that in 1985 we increased the qualifying peri making applications from one year to two years. B allowing for that change in the law, the caselo obviously falling significantly.

A few months into the financial year 1989-9 long-term downward trend was reversed and the n of applications started to rise. By the end of that fi year—1989-90—the annual total had reached over applications, a rise of 20 per cent. In the present fi year—1990-91—the number of applications has co to rise substantially. Up to the end of October, the already been over 21,000 applications, and on trends the annual total will have risen to about 37 the end of this financial year. That amounts to a increase of 20 per cent. over last year, which itself an increase of 20 per cent. over the previous year.

The reason for this sudden increase are still not clear—certainly not to us. Part of the increase, es in 1989-90, is due to an unexpectedly high num applications under the Wages Act 1986. But tha from the whole story. The great bulk of t applications—around 70 per cent.—concern dismissal and redundancy payments. Applications these jurisdictions have also increased substantiall

In the light of that, I turn now to the budgetary that the hon. Gentleman rightly raised. This year's for the Industrial Tribunals was, of course, draw early 1988 when the caseload was around 26,000 falling. Earlier this summer, it became clear president of the Industrial Tribunals for Engla Wales that, if the present trend of applications co the tribunal budget for 1990-91 would be overspe

The president therefore very properly decided keep within their budgets the tribunals must cut t of part-time chairmen, who are paid a daily fee f work. I should emphasise that this was the pre decision—not, as I think the hon. Gentleman m suggested, the Government's. That is how it shoul was not for the Government to tell the industrial t how to ensure that they keep within their budget, and remains very properly a matter for the presid

The president of the industrial tribunals therefo the industrial tribunal regional offices on 7 Aug part-time chairmen were to be used only in emer That was not an easy decision to take. It was clear to cause delays, since, on average, part-time chairm a quarter of all cases. It was also clear that it

seriously affect performance in relation to the targets which I mentioned earlier and to which the hon. Gentleman referred.

But in my view it was a responsible and correct decision. Perhaps at this point I can pay tribute to the president of the Industrial Tribunals for England and Wales, His Honour Judge Sir David West-Russell. Sir David will retire at the end of the year having spent more than six years as president. He has been an excellent president and a tonic for the industrial tribunal system generally. We are sorry to see him go, but we look forward equally to working with his successor, Judge Timothy Lawrence.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: How can the Government possibly blame that gentleman for taking the decision that he had to take because the Government refused to give him adequate resources to ensure that everyone had a hearing within the target date? It was the responsibility not of that gentleman but of Government. I want to hear in the Minister's speech a commitment that all cases will be heard within the target time and that money will be made available to ensure just that.

Mr. Forth: I regret the hon. Gentleman's use of the word "blame". I tried to make clear that it was the responsibility of the president—which he correctly discharged—to ensure that, within the resources available at the time, correct decisions were made about how to administer the system. That was done. I shall come in a moment to the present position in response to what the hon. Gentleman said. I want to put it clearly on record that I do not accept the use of the term "blame". I have acknowledged that the president correctly discharged his responsibilities.

The decision to cut the part-time chairmen attracted some publicity, to which the hon. Gentleman referred. He also referred to the TUC's concern and the fact that there was an exchange of letters on the subject between Norman Willis, the general secretary of the TUC, and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State.

The hon. Gentleman also referred to the difficulties caused by this decision and to the large number of NHS cases before industrial tribunals. He acknowledged his special interest in NHS matters. I do not deny those difficulties for one moment. Nor do I deny the difficulties in Southampton. They arose with particular acuteness in Southampton because that region makes more use of part-time chairmen to hear cases than do most other parts of the country. I know that the regional chairman in Southampton was especially worried about the situation.

But I am happy to tell the hon. Gentleman that those problems are now substantially over. At the same time as he took his decision about the use of part-time chairmen, the president naturally approached the Department of Employment to see whether additional funds could be made available to the tribunals. After careful consideration, the Government decided to make further funds available to the tribunals so that they could operate normally for the rest of the year. Those extra funds—amounting in total to some £750,000—have now been allocated. The hon. Gentleman will be pleased to hear that that has enabled the president of the industrial tribunals to review his decision about the use of part-time chairmen. He has decided—it is his decision—that it will be possible to use them again for hearings in the normal way. The tribunal regional offices were therefore told on 9 November that they could return to normal working.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: May I take it, therefore, that no longer will there be problems of backlogs, that any backlogs will be cleared and that perhaps from some date in the next few months all cases will be heard within the target date that the Government have set for the hearing of such cases?

Mr. Forth: I can certainly say that the resources now available to the tribunals are adequate for their needs and that the president is satisfied that the work of the tribunals can continue in the way that he would desire. The additional resources to which I referred are adequate to the needs of the moment. I shall come on to the future in a minute.

The main issue that we must explore is the need to make better and more effective forecasts of industrial tribunal applications—that is from where our difficulties have stemmed. As I tried to suggest, such forecasting is notoriously difficult. I doubt whether we can come up with anything that carried any certainty, but it is important to try to achieve it. Given the hon. Gentleman's interest in the matter, I should be happy to consider any suggestions that he has for making forecasting more effective in the current circumstances. I do not want the problems to recur.

I cannot say anything definite about next year's budget—because final decisions have yet to be reached about the detailed allocation resulting from the recent public expenditure settlement that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister announced when he was Chancellor.

I believe that the concept of industrial tribunals as inexpensive, speedy and informal dispensers of justice is important. I want to do all that we can to preserve that concept. I am therefore grateful to the hon. Gentleman for raising this matter and for giving me the chance to put on record the response that the Government have been able to make to the difficulties that arose.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Can the Minister assure me that he will keep under permanent review whether target dates are met in terms of hearings held in the target period? Will he ask for a report every three months from the chairmen? If at any time it appears likely that, due to increasing caseloads, a backlog may develop again, will he use his best endeavours to ensure that moneys are made available?

Mr. Forth: Given the lessons that we have learnt about the forecasting system and its inadequacies, and the experience gained from the president, I assure the hon. Gentleman that we are reviewing all the relevant parameters. We are attempting to ensure as best we can, within the limitations of the budgeting and forecasting system with which the Government are inevitably involved, that the problems will not recur. We are working closely with the president to ensure that the system works effectively.

[Mr. Forth]

We believe in the system of tribunals and we want to make them work properly. I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for raising this matter again and strengthening my hand to deal with it as effectively as possible. I hope that he will accept that we are approaching it in t positive manner. Tonight's debate will benefit th of tribunals that we both value so highly becaus contribution that they make.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at eighteen minutes o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 29 November 1990

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

BRITISH RAILWAYS (NO. 2) BILL *(By Order)*
Order for consideration, as amended, read.
To be considered on Thursday 6 December.

HEATHROW EXPRESS RAILWAY BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*
Order for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time on Thursday 6 December.

Oral Answers to Questions

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Farm Subsidies

1. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received about cuts in farm subsidies; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. John Gummer): I have received a large number of representations. Negotiations on GATT are due to be brought to a conclusion at a meeting in Brussels next week; my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and I will attend.

Mr. Thurnham: Should not we be moving away from the kind of protectionism that the Opposition want, so that Europe's farmers become less dependent on the taxpayer and more sensitive to the needs of consumers, in the widest possible sense?

Mr. Gummer: The Community has already made a considerable offer to the GATT round, which will mean —over a period—a reduction of 30 per cent. in the support that we give. That, however, will have to be done at a pace that the farming industry can accommodate.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Is not it true that the figure is not 30 per cent., but a net 15 per cent. from now, and that that in no way meets the demands of the Americans taking part in the GATT negotiations, who want 70 per cent? How does the right hon. Gentleman intend to ensure that a trade war does not break out after the conference that is due next week?

Mr. Gummer: I am hot in the House of Commons to meet the demands of the Americans; I am here to defend the interests of Britain, and the European Community of which we are part. If the hon. Gentleman wants to carry out GATT talks on the basis that we give in to mid-western American farmers instead of defending our own interests, it is a good job that it is not his party that is responsible for standing up for Britain, because it would not do so.

Sir Hector Monro: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the increase in the suckler cow subsidy, the advance payment on the sheep premium and the drop in interest rates have been a great help to livestock farmers? Nevertheless, we must accept that prices have been substantially down this autumn and that we have a long way to go to increase profitability.

Mr. Gummer: My hon. Friend is entirely right. In relation to the less-favoured areas, I have done all that I can within the rules of the Community; but world price levels have none the less fallen, which means that our livestock farmers are having a very difficult time. We shall have to continue to look for ways in which we can help.

Dr. David Clark: Is the Minister not aware that it simply does not make sense to throw good money after bad to subsidise farmers? Will not he go to Europe and press for a fundamental reform of the common agricultural policy, using agri-environmental payments as the core of the policy, as advocated by the Labour party and all reputable conservation and farming lobbies?

Mr. Gummer: If the Labour party began by accepting that we do not "go to Europe", because we are already in Europe, its members might get the geography right before proceeding any further. It is that attitude to the rest of Europe which will make it impossible for us to obtain a reasonable arrangement on agriculture.

The hon. Gentleman knows very well that the present Government have obtained a better deal in Europe than any that Labour could possibly hope to obtain. Until he advances propositions that show some understanding of the common agricultural policy, he will continue to be listened to by no one, either in this country or in the rest of Europe.

Rev. Ian Paisley: Has the right hon. Gentleman seen the answer given to me last Thursday on this issue by his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland? Will he assure the farmers of Northern Ireland that their special interests will be kept in mind?

Mr. Gummer: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will agree that I have taken a particular interest in the needs of the farmers of Northern Ireland. I have met the Ulster Farmers Union and other farming interests and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland keeps me very fully informed. I shall ensure that in the negotiations we do not forget the particular problems of Ulster.

Hill Farmers

2. **Ms. Armstrong:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what effect the recent agreement regarding subsidies to farming will have on small hill farmers.

3. **Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the present position of and future prospects for livestock farmers in the English uplands.

Mr. Gummer: Any agreement in GATT must provide the opportunity for continued support for farmers in less-favoured areas.

Ms. Armstrong: Is the Minister aware of the desperate plight of many hill farmers in Weardale and many other areas of my constituency who play a critical role in maintaining the enormous beauty of the area? What can he do to guarantee a future for them?

Mr. Gummer: I am sure that the hon. Lady will agree that I have already sought to do all that can be done to help the hill farmers of whom she speaks. I hope that she also agrees that I have sought to ensure that they get the extra and special help that they need. I hope, however, that the hon. Lady will mention to them the policies of her own party, which the recent independent report showed would be infinitely damaging to them and would mean a considerable loss in terms of their existing incomes.

Mr. Nicholson: May I pay tribute to the concern about this matter hitherto shown by my right hon. Friend, in contrast with the desultory interest shown by the Labour party, typified by the extraordinary gaffe a moment ago by the Labour spokesman on agriculture, the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark). I am sure that my right hon. Friend is aware of the problems faced by hill farmers in my constituency—those who farm on Exmoor, the Brendon hills, the Quantocks and the Blackdown hills. Will he do his best to bring forward the hill livestock compensatory allowance payments for 1991 to the earliest possible date?

Mr. Gummer: I assure my hon. Friend that I am still considering the information given to me on the hill livestock compensatory allowance. I shall make the announcement as soon as I possibly can. My hon. Friend was right to point out that, despite remarks of a constituency nature by Opposition Members, the Labour party's policies would very significantly reduce farmers' incomes, as the Savill report shows.

Mr. John D. Taylor: In view of yesterday's statement by the vice-president of the European Community that at the GATT talks he is prepared to negotiate subsidy reductions amounting to more than 30 per cent. if the Community agrees to reductions amounting to more than 30 per cent., will the Secretary of State bring the proposal back to the House for consideration before Her Majesty's Government approve it?

Mr. Gummer: Over the years, I have learnt that leaks during negotiations in Brussels or anywhere else are better not commented upon until we know the realities. I do not believe that the right hon. Gentleman has found me wanting in defending United Kingdom interests. I shall continue to do so.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: Does my right hon. Friend agree that milk quotas have been an outstanding success in directing taxpayers' money throughout the EEC to the producers rather than to the storers and in preventing subsidies from going to exported surplus commodities? Why can he not see that the same system could be applied universally, thereby preventing the depopulation of the countryside without excess expense to the taxpayer?

Mr. Gummer: There are very grave difficulties about extending quotas to the whole of the agricultural industry. It would cause the end of the growth in new technology, a wholly quotaed system would remove the inter market and young people would be deterred fror agriculture. Moreover, agriculture would not cha would be extremely damaging and I certainly propose it.

Mr. Ron Davies: Does the Minister acknow particularly important role that hill livestock c ory allowances play in the uplands? Is he still al Council of Ministers in resisting the tiering of Does he not accept that if tiering were introduce prove to be a particularly effective method of support on the small upland family farms, whic in need of that help?

Mr. Gummer: Throughout my time as Minis shown interest in HLCAs and sought to use effectively as possible. Also, Britain has sough the HLCAs and has permission from the Com do that. I hope that we shall be able to sp elsewhere. The HLCAs are an essential way people in the hillsides to look after the land. Wit the land would not be properly cared for.

Small Farmers

4. **Mr. Steen:** To ask the Minister of A Fisheries and Food what proposals he has to pr farmers from unfair competition.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the M Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. David C seek to ensure fair competition for all British f

Mr. Steen: It is not just hill farmers who difficulties. Livestock farmers in the lowland facing severe difficulties, many of them to th bankruptcy. Can my hon. Friend the Minister s to doing something about the cheap imports of eastern Europe which are coming through east That is having a terrible effect on the meat regi small lowland farmers. Also, will he look again because that may be a way of helping small farm with the most intolerable conditions?

Mr. Curry: I quite understand my hon concern about small farmers. As he will recall, to help them when we distributed the extra 1 p milk. We have to be careful, but any Community small farmers would stand precious little chance the United Kingdom, due to the different sizes. we look at all the options, particularly in th GATT, but there is a danger of prices being l that they are marooned above consumption and then have a new crisis. There is the problem of Kingdom being pinned down where it has a c advantage. We could do with more milk, but produce it, because of the quota system and major problem of young entrants. We are no meat coming into the United Kingdom Germany, but east Germany can circulate throughout the entire Community and we will e strongest supervision over that.

Mr. Geraint Howells: Does the Minister small hill farmers will not survive without fi from the Government? To restore confidenc Minister give an assurance that he will do his

ensure that no further subsidy cuts will be made in the next four or five years? What immediate plans has he to help farmers in need?

Mr. Curry: I agree absolutely with the hon. Gentleman about the importance of the hill farmer. I agree also that the hill farmer will not survive without some support from the public purse. We have extended a large addition to the subsidy going to the beef and sheepmeat sector in particular. We keep the matter under review. We have a series of programmes relating to how we can help environmentally, but we cannot reverse what is happening in the marketplace. We will do our best to help and we recognise the importance of those producers.

Mr. Marland: As my hon. Friend is aware, many dairy farmers, both small and large, depend on the purchasing ability of the milk marketing board. Now that the future of the board is in the public domain, will my hon. Friend consider a role for it as a possible buyer of last resort for milk?

Mr. Curry: The future role of the milk marketing board is a matter for the board itself. We are anxious for the board to make proposals for the future of dairy marketing in the United Kingdom. There is no Government-prescribed plan for that. We are obviously discussing various options with it, but it is for the board to decide where it wants to go. It started the debate—not the Government—and now that it has been started it must be carried through to a sensible conclusion.

Research and Development

5. **Mr. Murphy:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last met the Institution of Professionals, Managers and Specialists to discuss the future of research and development.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. David Maclean): December 1989 was the last occasion when the IPMS approached this Department on research and development and the matter was dealt with by correspondence.

Mr. Murphy: Does the Minister accept that public confidence in his Department was severely shaken by the closure of the Institute of Food Research in Bristol? How does he intend to restore public confidence in his Department when he intends to sack 40 food scientists at Norwich and Reading?

Mr. Maclean: Quite simply, by pointing out the full facts. Although Bristol closed, the laboratories at Norwich and Reading are being expanded and there are four other research associations. My Department operates labora tories at Weybridge, Torry and Weymouth. Seventy of the scientists who gave up their posts at Bristol will transfer to Bristol university and we shall increase research expenditure from £13 million to £17 million. Food safety research is being increased, not cut.

Mr. Conway: Does my hon. Friend agree that the level of research in this country is the envy of Europe?

Mr. Maclean: I do. For example, in respect of the jobs at Norwich which were mentioned, we are transferring the £750,000 that was being spent at that laboratory on near-market projects such as robotics, meat handling and processing, to diet and nutrition, health and safety salmonella, listeria and BSE research—which is the righ priority for Government.

Mr. Morley: The Minister's answer is not good enough In a written answer from his Department dated 2 October, he announced a cutback of 38 research projects Thirteen of them relate to fish refrigeration, shellfish smoking and safety. The Minister knows that the fishin industry is facing a crisis, so how does he expect it to pic up the vital research projects that he is cutting back thereby undermining the industry's viability?

Mr. Maclean: The hon. Gentleman misses the point Food safety research has increased from £13·2 million to £17·1 million this year. It is right that the taxpayers' money should be spent on basic, strategic and food safety research, and for the industry to concentrate on near-market projects involving food techniques and processing, which it is better able to understand and to fund.

Rhizomania

6. **Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what arrangements there are in place to monitor his Ministry's voluntary code of practice on protecting farms from rhizomania.

Mr. Curry: Our guidelines to civil engineering contractors on precautions against the spread of animal and plant diseases emphasise the need for the plant health and seeds inspectorate to be consulted from the planning stage of all major works affecting agricultural land.

Mr. Coombs: Given the appalling devastation that rhizomania can mean for sugar beet farmers, because the sterilisation of affected land can last for 25 years, will my hon. Friend listen sympathetically to the demands of the National Farmers Union, which is seeking a statutory system of compensation for consequential losses for growers of sugar beet affected by rhizomania and a code of practice to protect sugar beet farms from the coercion of contractors, in particular?

Mr. Curry: There is no provision for payment for consequential losses even in the animal sector, let alone the plant sector. If I were to suggest that such compensation would be likely to be introduced, I should be telling my hon. Friend something that is not the case. As to contractors, we plan to reissue our guidelines in the new year. A statutory basis would not make sense and would be bureaucratic and almost impossible to enforce—but we shall certainly be ready to intervene where there are difficulties. I am prepared to review the controls that we impose in respect of rhizomania, to ensure that, within the requirement to be absolutely strict about preventing the spread of the disease, we are as intelligent and flexible as possible.

Hill Farming

7. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he next plans to meet representatives of the National Farmers Union to discuss British hill farming.

Mr. Gummer: I met representatives of the National Farmers Union on 23 October to discuss the economic conditions in the hills and uplands. I met other representatives of those areas yesterday.

Mr. Griffiths: The Minister mentioned in an earlier reply his defence of the hill livestock compensatory allowance. Can he explain why, since 1987, it has been cut by £12·5 million in real terms? When the Minister met NFU representatives, did he give any indication that he is thinking of restoring the value of the allowance in real terms, perhaps to the 1986 level, as that could prove vital to hill farmers?

Mr. Gummer: I have increased hill livestock compensatory amounts, as the Government have done on several occasions. The hon. Gentleman may like to explain to his hill farmers why the independent Savill report suggests that if Labour party policies were adopted there would be a 17 per cent. drop in the typical farmer's profitability.

Mr. Hunter: What is my right hon. Friend's reaction to the NFU's suggestion that the way forward for hill farming and, indeed, all United Kingdom farming is through the introduction of strict supply management?

Mr. Gummer: I do not believe that supply management is the answer to agriculture's problems. We need to get nearer the market, make our support more environmentally oriented and ensure that we do not overproduce. If we were to quota the whole of agriculture, we should do considerable harm to the industry.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: Given that the maintenance of the hill sector is particularly important to ensure the viability of our rural economy and given that in Scotland 90 per cent. of hill farming lies in the less-favoured areas, can the right hon. Gentleman tell us when he expects to be able to make a clear statement on the future level of HLCAs? Many of our farmers have reduced incomes because of a drop in the price of calves and lambs.

Mr. Gummer: As I said in answer to an earlier question, I shall make that announcement as soon as possible. I have already extended the suckler cow premium in the LFAs to the maximum amount available. A ewe supplement is to be paid to sheep farmers in the LFAs in 1991. The green pound devaluation will be effective from 7 January. Assistance to the beef and sheep sectors is now worth about £330 million more than in the previous year. There is already a considerable amount of extra help. We are certainly looking at the possibilities of what we should do in terms of the HLCAs, but much has already been done, as I believe that the hon. Lady would acknowledge.

Miss Emma Nicholson: I know that my right hon. Friend has the future of the small family farm in mind. With the freer markets that we expect from within——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The question is about hill farming. The next question is about family farms.

Miss Nicholson: I know that my right hon. Friend has the future of the small family hill farm in mind. Will he make an early statement on term tenancies, which may be the only way in which sons and daughters of small family hill farmers can enter this important industry?

Mr. Gummer: I have already made it c
publish a paper on alternatives to deal with
paper will protect the rights of present tena
hope that we shall look for a radical chan
so that more land comes forward for letti

Family Farms

8. **Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask t
Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if h
statement on the financial position of
present.

Mr. Curry: It is our policy to foster
competitive farming industry and to ensu
viability.

Mr. Taylor: I am interested to hear t
wants to foster an efficient and comp
industry. Does he know how strongly fa
the fact that, as the prices that they rece
them uncompetitive and unviable and fon
business, supermarket prices for the
produce continue to climb? How is it that
manage to preside over the worst of both

Mr. Curry: I thought that the hon.
represents a party which is supposed to be
market economics, would realise that if t
of supply it is difficult for incomes to rise
However, we can try to help farmers to ov
of their problems. They will do that
competitive. That is our policy and th
sensible way of going about it.

Mr. Boscawen: Will my right hon. Frie
can to persuade the banks to be more
towards some of our small farmers? W
Government were in office, those farmers
to produce all that they could at any co
borrowing—in some cases, overborro
banks.

Mr. Curry: In general terms, the level
British farmers is about 25 per cent., so
overborrowed. I recognise that some sm
serious difficulties and that is why we try
to them as quickly as possible so that we
flow. I will bear in mind my hon. Friend'
the banks could be helpful when they co
cases.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: The Ministe
family farms and the farmers in ther
contribution to maintaining the fabric of
one of the main problems resulting fr
pressures facing them this year is that th
very much under threat. What furthe
Minister announce to enhance rural soci
that that fabric is maintained into the n

Mr. Curry: I am perfectly aware of
farmers play in maintaining rural l
constituency has characteristics simil
Gentleman's constituency. Governmen
maintain farming family life as such, b
that we give the necessary assistance,
uplands farms, to enable them to get
economic circumstances, which we all u

we are able to give further help, especially assistance to farmers who look after the environment as part of their food-producing function, we shall take the initiatives that are open to us.

Mr. Harris: Will my hon. Friend take it from me—and indeed from every hon. Member who represents a rural constituency—that this time round, the farming community and the National Farmers Union are not crying wolf when they speak about the real pressure on farming? My hon. Friend spoke about helping the environment. Will he and my right hon. Friend look sympathetically at the possible extension of the environmentally sensitive areas, especially for Penwith in my constituency?

Mr. Curry: We shall certainly examine the possibility of adding to our policies for helping environmental enhancement. We understand the NFU's point about farmers being in difficulties and our experience is that it would be foolish to deny it. However, I hope that the NFU will not say merely that the answer is yet another multiplication of public subsidy. That is not an answer. If the NFU comes up with sensible proposals that are costed, effective and targeted we shall listen.

Small Farmers

9. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent representations he has received from small farmers and hill farmers.

Mr. Gummer: I have received a number of representations about the position of small farms and of farms in the hills and uplands. I shall continue to keep the position under review.

Mr. Pike: Does not the Minister recognise that, despite his words this afternoon in reply to similar questions, small farmers and hill farmers will judge the Government not by their words but by their actions? The Minister may find it necessary in the next few weeks to visit Ribble Valley and the Trough of Bowland. If he looks at the balance sheets of the farmers in those areas, he will find that they are now receiving less in real terms for their livestock than they were receiving a few years ago and that they are facing bankruptcy. They expect action from the Government. When will they see it, or will they be allowed to go out of business?

Mr. Gummer: If the hon. Gentleman talks to those farmers, he will hear from them that the suckler cow premium has been increased to the maximum allowable in those areas; that is action. He will hear that this Government have brought forward the payment of the ewe premium both for the first and for the second instalment; that means action. He will hear that the Government have done so much for the livestock industry that they are now spending almost £800 million a year in support of that industry; that means action. The farmers will then turn to the hon. Gentleman and say that all that the Labour party speaks of is to reduce farm incomes by its policies. Labour's only action would be to cut incomes during these difficult times for farmers. The hon. Gentleman must not come to the House as poorly prepared as that.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: Although I warmly welcome my right hon. Friend's actions for those who farm in less-favoured areas, is not he concerned by the letters I have sent to him from members of the High Livestock Society, representing farmers in the villag Wildboarclough, Wincle, Langley, Rainow Kettleshulme? Those farmers are deepy concerned a their future. Does he accept that hill farmers are esse to the maintenance of the countryside, which is a matt great environmental importance?

Mr. Gummer: My hon. Friend asks a constitue based question and shows that he understands his farn problems. His question stands in sharp contradistinc to the previous one.

My hon. Friend will know that I agree with entirely. Without farmers, the countryside will no cared for, and farmers need the support of societ enable them to look after the countryside. They canno it unless they earn enough to meet the costs.

Farm Subsidies

10. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the Minister of Agricult Fisheries and Food if he will list the progress made by Department in securing a reduction of the Europ Commission budget spent on agricultural subsidies s 1979; and if he will outline any current proposals wh the Government have for further reductions.

Mr. Gummer: We have had a sustained and progres reduction in the real level of agricultural support pr since 1984 and we are committed to achieving a sustai reduction in the level of support in the current GA negotiations.

Mr. Allen: I do not blame the Minister personally, a has not been in the job very long, but the Governm have had 11 years in which to reduce the level of subs and it still costs the average family about £15 a w throughout the year to sustain high food prices. Now t we have a Prime Minister——

Mr. Speaker: Order. What is the hon. Gentlema question?

Mr. Allen: We now have a Prime Minister who may less supportive of the United States, but will he continu guarantee that the position of the United States in seek freer trade in agricultural products will be sustained him and by the Government?

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Gentleman's figures are utte wrong; they simply do not stand up. If there were subsidies, world food prices would rise considerably a the consumer would have to pay more. The £15 figure t he cited has no basis in any sensible fact. I note that supports United States farmers against United Kingd farmers. I hope that his hon. Friends will realise that would like to reduce farm incomes even further and I ho that farmers in constituencies round his will know exac how to vote when the time comes.

Mr. Riddick: Does my right hon. Friend agree th despite the so-called renegotiation under the previo Labour Government, the common agricultural policy w totally out of control when the Conservative party ca into government back in 1979? Does he agree that only t resolve and determination of this Government and of r right hon. Friend the former Prime Minister brought so sense into the bloated budget?

Mr. Gummer: The lovely countryside of Nottinghamshire would be destroyed if the policies supported by the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) were adopted.

Dr. David Clark: Will the Minister confirm that spending on agricultural surpluses has got out of hand? Will he confirm that there has been a 68-fold increase of skimmed milk powder, a fourfold increase of beef and a doubling of the amount of butter in intervention? Will he further confirm that he will have to spend an extra £1 billion in the next few years to support that? When will the Minister go to Brussels and start fighting for the British consumer?

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Gentleman betrays his lack of knowledge both of the common agricultural policy and of the negotiations that are taking place. This Government have fought more effectively than any previous Government for the British consumer and the British farmer and this Minister will continue to do that in the GATT round. It would help considerably if the Opposition would stop slagging off Britain and start supporting its farmers.

Mr. Gill: Does my right hon. Friend agree that, whatever form agricultural subsidies or support for the countryside may take in the future, it is vital that the regime should be universal in the Community so that we may have an open and fair market?

Mr. Gummer: My hon. Friend is perfectly right. The Government are fighting for fairness among the countries of the European Community and between the Community and the other countries of the world. That is why I wish that the Opposition would stop promoting American interests and start supporting European interests.

Farm Incomes

11. **Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of the prospective future trends of farm incomes.

Mr. Gummer: It is not my practice to forecast future levels of farm incomes.

Mr. Davies: Will the Minister confirm that 80 per cent. of current farm subsidies go to the richest 20 per cent. of farmers? As the Minister is so anxious to reduce the overall level of farm subsidies, will he tell us what proposals he has to ensure the more equal distribution of the subsidies that will remain?

Mr. Gummer: The policies of this Government are to make sure that subsidies will continue to be paid on the basis of production, where they are production subsidies, and that other subsidies shall increasingly be paid for environmental purposes. *[Interruption.]* We are determined to make sure that British farmers get a fair share of those subsidies and that they are not distorted so as to help other countries disproportionately. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I ask the House to listen to these questions. This is a rare opportunity and there are only six minutes before Prime Minister's Question Time.

Mr. John Greenway: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the spirit of the agreement in the Agriculture Council with regard to the reduction of agricultural support in the GATT round relates only to support th and has not stopped the British Gover European member state Governmer environment? Does he agree that the p by 36,000 hectares of less-favoured ar boost? Will he announce soon exactl included so that farmers will receive e

Mr. Gummer: My hon. Friend is arrangements suggest that we will be a help that we are giving for environmer we reduce that which relates to pro there is still much to be fought becaus is proposing something that would en direct support and thus reduce the cost must stop that.

Mr. Beggs: Does the Minister agree ways of assisting farmers is to ensure th price for their product in the marketpla releasing surplus food from interventio Russian people at this time and there demand for British produce?

Mr. Gummer: I am not sure that the as the hon. Gentleman suggests. We are of ways of improving the market, but, i of the market will be upheld only if supp much more closely correlated.

Agriculture (Profitabil

12. **Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Minis Fisheries and Food if he will make a fu the current level of profitability in agriculture.

Mr. Gummer: Farming, particular sector, is going through a difficult time are determined to ensure its continued

Mr. Hunter: Will my right hon. opportunity to put firmly on record hi problems caused by a lack of profitabil House and United Kingdom farmers ultimate success of his strategy?

Mr. Gummer: I will reassure my h continue to stand extremely strongly farming community. I hope that, with r will pay tribute to the success of m Parliamentary Secretary in ensuring knacker industry is no longer stopped Community rules. It will remain as it is and thereafter there will be a review. T that the environment is protected becau job that that industry does.

Mr. Flynn: Does the Minister ag problem in British farming is the gulf b and subsidies and between the grain ba and their huge profits and the hill far elsewhere? Does he agree that the problems of hill farming is to red towards hill farmers?

Mr. Gummer: What the hon. G absolutely untrue. Our arable farmer considerable squeeze. Many of them

difficult to make profits. Unless they are profitable, they, too, cannot look after the countryside. The hon. Gentleman does the farming industry no good by trying to drive a wedge between different kinds of farmers.

Milk Marketing Board

13. **Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received on the future of the milk marketing board.

Mr. Curry: I have received representations on this subject from a range of individuals and organisations representing milk producers, processors and consumers.

Mr. Bennett: Although I recognise that the present system cannot remain unreformed, will my hon. Friend bear in mind the position of small family farmers in far-flung areas such as Pembrokeshire, who fear that if the national system is broken up into as many as 30 different co-operatives, they will be seriously disadvantaged in relation to dairy manufacturers?

Mr. Curry: My hon. Friend is right, but the greatest threat to the small farmer would be to do absolutely nothing and wait for the scheme to collapse under the weight of its problems. The answer is to find a sensible alternative and to get a move on with it.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Roger King:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for 29 November 1990. The first question to a great new Prime Minister, Sir.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major) *rose*——

Mr. Skinner: Resign!

The Prime Minister: Now wait a while.

This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall have further meetings later today.

This evening I shall attend a longstanding engagement in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Altrincham and Sale (Sir F. Montgomery).

Mr. King: May I preface my question by asking——

Hon. Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: I think that it would be more helpful if the hon. Gentleman encompassed it.

Mr. King: In congratulating my right hon. Friend on becoming Prime Minister, may I assure him of the total and united support of my constituency and every constituency in the country?

May I draw my right hon. Friend's attention to the latest round of national health service cuts in the South Birmingham area—a cut of 17 per cent. in the past 15 months in the number of people awaiting an operation and a cut of 26 per cent. in the past five years in the same group? Will my right hon. Friend ensure that the national health service continues to make such cuts?

The Prime Minister: That is certainly the intention of our reforms, our management and our financing of the national health service. I congratulate South Birmingh health authority. It has made good use of the e resources that it had last year and I expect it to conti to do so in the future.

Mr. Kinnock *rose*——

Hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am anxious to call as many h Members as possible.

Mr. Kinnock: May I offer my personal congratulati to the right hon. Gentleman on becoming Prime Minis As the right hon. Gentleman says that he was bounced i the poll tax, does he now intend to abolish it?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to the right h Gentleman for his welcome to the Dispatch Box. I l forward to our discussions over the forthcoming years. the community charge, I have made it perfectly clear w the position will be. We have decided that we shall l again to see what further refinements may be necessary ensure that the community charge is accepted through the country.

Mr. Kinnock: May I offer some help to the right h Gentleman—[HON. MEMBERS: "No."] It is well intend He could save himself a great deal of time and trouble a the British people a great deal of money by accept Labour party policy and abolishing the poll tax now.

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend the Secret of State for the Environment will take forward a v thorough, constructive and fundamental review of community charge. In doing so, he will take account of points made by my hon. Friends both north and south the Scottish border before we reach conclusions. On t side of the House we believe in examining matters bef reaching conclusions.

Mr. Kinnock: Everybody, including the right h Gentleman, knows that there is only one fundament efficient and fair thing to do with the poll tax and tha to scrap it.

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman forg the alternative, to which he has decided to return. Was i it he who, in 1980, said that

"the most unjust of all taxes, local rates, take most from th who can afford least"?

Q2. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Prime Minis if he will list his official engagements for Thursday November.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the rep that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Thompson: Will my right hon. Friend accept t special congratulations and welcome that he will recei from East Anglian Members of Parliament and th constituents, particularly as he is an East Anglian Mem of Parliament, representing Huntingdon? Will he confi that shortly he will meet President Bush to discuss the G and other matters of common concern so as to contin the Government's correct policy on these issues?

The Prime Minister: I can certainly confirm that to m hon. Friend. The date has not yet been fixed, but I ho that it will be this side of Christmas.

Mr. Ashdown: May I congratulate the right hon. Gentleman on his appointment as Britain's Prime Minister? The whole nation will wish him success in the difficult task ahead—[HON. MEMBERS: "Speak for yourself."] For the sake of the nation, we wish the right hon. Gentleman success.

If in two weeks' time at the intergovernmental conference all 11 of our European partners say that they can accept the right hon. Gentleman's hard ecu proposal, provided that he will accept that it could be used as a transitional mechanism towards a single currency, perhaps by the end of the decade, will he agree?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for his generous welcome, which I appreciate. There will be a wide range of matters to discuss at the intergovernmental conference and we need to discuss them with great care before we proceed. The Government's position on the imposition of a single currency is clear: it is not acceptable.

Mrs. Peacock: After the recent turmoil and my right hon. Friend's uniting of the party, does he agree that his objective of a classless society in the future will be better served by a Conservative Government led by him than by the socialism offered by the Labour party?

The Prime Minister: I am happy to agree entirely with my hon. Friend about that. We need to continue to build on what has been achieved in the past 11 years to make this an open society of opportunity. The Government propose to do that.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: The Prime Minister in his recent meteoric rise has shown great dignity and pride in his humble origins. What priority will he now give to the problem of homelessness which he inherited from his predecessor? In particular, will he look at the issues of cardboard cities, people who live in damp homes and those who have no hope of a roof over their heads?

The Prime Minister: Everyone is entitled to dignity and pride. The Government's policies will endeavour to ensure that they can attain them.

Q3. **Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 29 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Coombs: May I, too, welcome my right hon. Friend to the Dispatch Box?

Given the record rate of growth in the economy over the past 10 years, and as my right hon. Friend was the Chancellor of the Exchequer who relieved 6 million non-taxpayers of the need to pay tax on their savings at source, does he agree that the next decade of opportunity crucially depends on further tax reductions and further savings incentives of exactly the sort that have so reinvigorated the country in the past 10 years?

The Prime Minister: I assure my hon. Friend that I certainly favour further tax reductions when they are affordable and it is prudent to make them. I am extremely keen to see the growth of savings for two reasons: first, to provide the base from which the investment we need in the 1990s will come and, secondly, for the security and independence that savings give individuals and their families.

Mr. Blunkett: Earlier this week, the right hon. Gentleman's former boss, the right hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson), described the poll tax as unworkable and politically catastrophic, whereas his predecessor as Prime Minister said that we had already had a fundamental review of the poll tax. Which of those two conflicting opposites has the Prime Minister advised the new Secretary of State to adopt in the new fundamental review of the poll tax to which he referred earlier?

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend the Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher) made it entirely clear on a number of occasions from this Dispatch Box that when any new charge of this sort was introduced, it would need to be kept under review. That is what we are doing.

Mr. Shersby: At the commencement of his Administration, will my right hon. Friend declare continuing support for the police in their difficult task of maintaining law and order?

The Prime Minister: The police do a magnificent job in this country, often in difficult circumstances. I have no hesitation whatever in assuring my hon. Friend that I have the greatest admiration for the way they behave.

Q4. **Mr. Patchett:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 29 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Patchett: If, as the right hon. Gentleman says, he is his own man, may I ask him to say in what way his policies will differ from those of his predecessor?

The Prime Minister: I am my own man and on that basis I see no need to beat my chest and tell the hon. Gentleman. Let him wait and see what we do.

Q5. **Mrs. Maureen Hicks:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 29 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mrs. Hicks: I warmly welcome my right hon. Friend as Prime Minister. May I invite him to take some advice from a female colleague in relation to inner cities? Does he agree that to achieve his aim of a classless Britain, which is highly commendable, the Government need to give the highest priority to inner cities? Will he afford me the honour as soon as possible of coming to Wolverhampton and giving me the opportunity to demonstrate our success and illustrate the contraints of municipal socialism, which continues to deny choice and opportunity?

The Prime Minister: I find that an irresistible invitation. I am familiar with the problems of the inner cities. I regard them as a matter of great importance and I have no doubt that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment will bend his formidable energies to that problem.

Mr. Robert Hughes: With regard to the Prime Minister's desire for a classless society and social mobility, will he explain why there are no women in his Cabinet, or is the only woman in his Cabinet the back-seat driver?

The Prime Minister: In recent years, in all aspects of life in this country, women have been taking a higher profile: in the law, in commerce, in the civil service, in industry and in politics—*[Interruption.]*—and that will continue. As those women would wish it to be, they will reach the top on merit—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

The Prime Minister: Oh yes, and if the hon. Gentleman is patient, he will find women aplenty in top positions in my Government. Indeed, if he had waited awhile, perhaps even to the end of today, he would not have asked that question.

Q6. **Mr. Gill:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list his official engagements for Thursday 29 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Gill: I endorse the congratulations of my west midlands colleague, my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mrs. Hicks). My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister will know of the tremendous support that exists for him in the west midlands. When my right hon. Friend visits Ludlow next July, will he take time to visit the Lady Forester memorial hospital in Much Wenlock, where Mrs. Major was born? He will find local people working hard to take over the management of their local hospital for the benefit of the local community.

The Prime Minister: I am certainly looking forward to visiting Much Wenlock. It is true that my wife was born at that hospital, so I have a good reason for looking forward to visiting it.

Mr. Radice: As a member of the Select Committee on the Treasury and Civil Service, may I congratulate the right hon. Gentleman on becoming Prime Minister? Now that he is Prime Minister, can he say whether the British economy is in recession?

The Prime Minister: As I have told the hon. Gentleman in the past, if he takes the classic definition of recession, it is never possible to determine whether we are in a recession until after the figures are available. As I have told the House more than once, I expect a small downturn in output for a brief period, but we shall be back in a growth pattern during the passage of next year, with inflation well down.

Business of the House

3.31 pm

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): Will the Leader of the House state the business for next week?

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John MacGregor): The business of the House for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 3 DECEMBER—Second Reading of Community Charges (Substitute Setting) Bill, followed by Second Reading of the Caravans (Standard Community Charge and Rating) Bill.

TUESDAY 4 DECEMBER—Motion to take note of EC documents relating to the 1991 EC budget. Details will be given in the *Official Report*.

Motion on the debts of Overseas Government (Determination of Relevant Percentage) Regulations.

The Chairman of Ways and Means will name opposed private business for consideration at seven o'clock.

WEDNESDAY 5 DECEMBER—Opposition Day (1st Allotted Day). There will be a debate on an Opposition motion entitled "The Abolition of the Poll Tax".

Motion relating to the National Health Service (Local Health Councils) (Scotland) Regulations.

THURSDAY 6 DECEMBER—There will be a debate on development in the European Community on a Government motion.

FRIDAY 7 DECEMBER—Private Members' motions.

MONDAY 10 DECEMBER—Second Reading of Atomic Weapons Establishment Bill.

[Tuesday 4 December

Relevant European Community documents

(a) COM(90) 121	*Preliminary Draft Budget of the European Communities for 1991*
(b) 8182/90	*Draft General Budget of the European Communities for the Financial Year 1991*
(c) 9865/90	*The European Parliament's proposed amendments and modifications to the Draft Budget*

Relevant Reports of European Legislation Committee
(a) HC 11-xxxi (1989-90), para 6
(b) HC 29-i (1990-91)
(c) No report.]

Dr. Cunningham: I congratulate the Leader of the House on maintaining his place in the Cabinet, and I look forward to working with him on matters pertaining to the House of Commons.

Has the Leader of the House seen the alarming reports in today's press about large scale redundancies in British Aerospace? If the sad reports are confirmed, and given the devastation to employment that the redundancies will cause, may we have an urgent statement next week from Ministers responsible for the aerospace industry?

Has the Leader of the House had the chance to reflect on the commitment made by his predecessor, the right hon. and learned Member for Surrey, East (Sir G. Howe), and the Prime Minister, when he was Chancellor of the Exchequer, that there would be a full day's debate this autumn on economic and monetary union before the intergovernmental conference? Are the Government now reneging on those commitments to the House and to the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee? If not, when do the Government propose to provide the second day for that debate, since the debate next week is about political changes in the Community?

Finally, I urge the Leader of the House to discuss with the new Chief Whip the possibility that, when we table a motion to abolish the poll tax next Wednesday, his right hon. and hon. Friends may have a free vote.

Mr. MacGregor: I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's remarks about co-operation on matters relating to the House of Commons. As I told him only a short while ago, I look forward to working with him on all matters relating to reforms and other issues of concern to the House, taking into account the various reports that we receive from various committees. I am grateful for his approach to these matters.

The hon. Gentleman's remarks about British Aerospace are a matter for the company. If there are changed market conditions, it is for the company to decide how to react to them. But I have noted what the hon. Gentleman says and I shall draw it to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

I am not sure that there was a specific commitment to a debate on European economic and monetary union, but if it is agreeable to Mr. Speaker it will be possible to refer to some of these matters in next Thursday's debate. I accept, however, that there should be a full day's debate on the subject; when it is held is a matter to be discussed through the usual channels.

I assure the hon. Gentleman that Conservative Members will be united in the position that they adopt in next Wednesday's debate.

Mr. Ian Bruce (Dorset, South): Has my right hon. Friend had a chance to speak to the Foreign Secretary about the tantalising thoughts that he expressed about reforming the business of the House if he were to become Prime Minister? While that is still fresh in his mind, may we begin to examine the timetabling and office accommodation of this place—and all the other aspects that make it an inefficient organisation and not an organisation for the 1990s?

Mr. MacGregor: I am aware of various reports on these matters. Progress is being made on accommodation; as my hon. Friend will know, Bridge street phase 1 is proceeding and I am keen that it should keep on target. A number of reports on matters concerning the House are before us at the moment and I am anxious to pursue them. The Government's position will be made clear in due course. The hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) and I are keen to ensure that we make progress on matters that are the responsibility of the House of Commons Commission as well. I cannot say whether it will be possible to reach agreement on all of them, but I intend to take them forward. I pay tribute, as I did in the Queen's Speech debate, to my predecessor for all that he did in the cause of House of Commons reform.

Mr. James Molyneaux (Lagan Valley): The Leader of the House will be aware that yesterday a Foreign Office Minister said that the Department was looking into reports of a speech made by the first secretary at the British embassy in Washington to a meeting in Boston in which he seemed to contradict at least five separate points of Government policies toward Northern Ireland. Will the right hon. Gentleman therefore ensure that there is a

statement to the House, in view of the detrimental effects of that speech on confidence and on the prospects for investment by America?

Mr. MacGregor: I shall certainly look into the matter and discuss it with my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Robert Rhodes James (Cambridge): When will the Government announce the repeal of the Education (Student Loans) Act 1990?

Mr. MacGregor: My hon. Friend knows of my interest in these matters. I think that it will be a beneficial Act, so the answer, as far as I am concerned, is that it will not be.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): Will the Leader of the House take this opportunity to welcome the report published yesterday by Sir Robin Ibbs and to announce a debate on the welcome prospect of the House being able to take control of the building in which we work?

Tomorrow is St. Andrew's day and marks the publication by the Scottish constitutional convention of its blueprint for a Scottish Parliament, so will the right hon. Gentleman arrange for the new Secretary of State for Scotland to come to the House next week with his response, and to show a welcome change of heart by the Government? Without such a change of heart, his party's policy is liable to be the one that leads to the break-up of the United Kingdom.

Mr. MacGregor: I entirely reject the hon. Gentleman's second point, and I therefore see no need for a statement. I am grateful to him for drawing attention to the Ibbs report; because of other events this week, it did not receive much prominence in the press, and I hope that hon. Members on both sides of the House will read it and let us have their views. I think that it has important implications for the future administration and financing of the House, as I have already made clear in a written answer, and I hope that we shall be able to debate the report when the process is complete.

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): Is my right hon. Friend aware that, as one of those who voted consistently against the community charge on Second and Third Reading of the legislation, I strongly welcome—as do many of my colleagues—the Government's new commitment to review the charge fundamentally?

Do not both my right hon. Friend and the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) agree that the House should be able so to manage the politics of this country that we can find a method of local government finance that has nothing whatever to do with party politics and reaches across the political divide? Will my right hon. Friend at least give me an assurance that he will try to achieve that objective?

Mr. MacGregor: I see little chance of that; but my hon. Friend knows what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has just said about further consideration of the community charge. He will also know that we have already spent a great deal of time reviewing the charge, and that measures are in the pipeline. There will be a number of opportunities to debate those matters next week.

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): Will the Leader of the House tell us whether, with the change of Prime Minister, there is any change in the prospects of haemophiliacs who have contracted the AIDS virus through contaminated blood products in the national health service? Is this not a wonderful opportunity to end the legal battle and to seek a fair and honourable settlement? May we have a statement next week, please?

Mr. MacGregor: As I have told the House before, we have always accepted the strong moral argument in favour of the haemophiliacs, which is why we have made £34 million available for ex gratia payments and promised to keep that figure under review. I should stress again, however, that the Government do not accept liability, and will resist any settlement that implies admission of negligence.

Sir Alan Glyn (Windsor and Maidenhead): Following yesterday's statement about the Gulf, will my right hon. Friend give serious consideration to arranging a full-scale debate on that subject before Christmas?

Mr. MacGregor: As my hon. Friend has said, a statement was made in the House yesterday. I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary would wish to come to the House in the event of any developments that required further statements or other methods of discussing the matter in the House.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Will the Leader of the House ask the Secretary of State for Energy to make a statement about industrial relations in the coal mining industry? Is he aware that, since the end of the strike, the National Union of Mineworkers—which is the largest trade union in the mining industry—has been refused permission to negotiate with British Coal? If the Government are talking about equality of opportunity, surely it is high time that a directive was issued by the Secretary of State allowing negotiations to take place.

Mr. MacGregor: I do not think that that is a matter about which I should ask my right hon. Friend to make a statement next week.

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): Further to the matter raised by the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux), is the Leader of the House aware that the statement attributed to the first secretary to the British embassy was most damaging and has done great harm in the United Kingdom in relation to business investment in Northern Ireland? For the secretary to say that the Government were pushing the Fair Employment Agency to bring sacrificial lambs to the altar was an insult to every employer of labour in Northern Ireland.

Will the Leader of the House ensure that the Foreign Secretary makes a statement to the House on this vital subject?

Mr. MacGregor: I have not seen the statement so I do not know what was said and do not wish to comment on it. However, as I said earlier, I will discuss the matter with my right hon. Friend.

Ms. Mildred Gordon (Bow and Poplar): Will the Leader of the House set aside time at an early date for a full debate on the condition of the voluntary sector social services organisations? The Government are always praising them. This week, however, three groups—the Hornsey centre, which provides conductive training for children with cerebral palsy, the Royal National Institute for the Blind's braille service and Tower Hamlets advanced technological

[Ms. Mildred Gordon]

training centre, which does wonderful work in an area where there is 25 per cent. unemployment—are all in serious financial trouble. The latter organisation receives funding from the European social fund. As the regulations have been changed, the cheque has to be processed by the Department of Employment. It has already waited for 11 months but has still not received its money.

Mr. MacGregor: The Government have constantly drawn attention to and supported the work of the voluntary sector. Moreover, there has been a substantial increase in funding for a large number of charitable bodies and voluntary sector organisations. Significant tax changes have also greatly increased the amount of money that flows from voluntary and corporate giving to the voluntary sector. Ours is a record of strong support in ways other than just making statements of support. We provide material support as well.

I know that there is a problem about braille. Nevertheless, having looked at the demand on resources that is faced by the Department which funds braille, and having taken into account the fact that the Royal National Institute for the Blind has been successful in raising funds, it did not seem to be a priority to continue to fund that operation as it had been funded in the past. There does not seem to be a case, therefore, for a debate on the subject next week.

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): Will my right hon. Friend do his utmost to ensure that we have a debate as soon as possible on a motion of confidence in the Government to tempt the Leader of the Opposition back to the Dispatch Box? Does my right hon. Friend agree that the more exposure the Leader of the Opposition gets the better it will be for Conservative Members? Does he not also agree that, judging by the looks on the faces of——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is not the purpose of business questions.

Mr. MacGregor: I can see why my hon. Friend is tempted, but we recently held a debate of that kind which resulted in a resounding victory for the Government.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): I support the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) about the need for a debate on British Aerospace's disgraceful announcement today of 4,500 redundancies. In that debate we ought to be able to question the Ministry of Defence on the need for alternative work and contracts so that defence workers do not have to pay the price of defence cuts. In preparation for such a debate, may I ask the Leader of the House to read an article in the last edition of the *Sunday Times* in which remarks were made by Professor Roland Smith, the chairman of British Aerospace? He said that, unless Government policies were changed, by the end of next year 10 per cent. of United Kingdom plc would be in receivership. Who is responsible for that—the former Prime Minister or the former Chancellor of the Exchequer?

Mr. MacGregor: I have already dealt with the business of the House on that matter, but I think that the hon. Gentleman is completely hypocritical in his approach to this matter. From the rumours that I have heard, it would appear that if there were to be changed market conditi they would relate to the fact that, with the ending of cold war, there was not need for the same degree expenditure on defence. That is the problem that will f the company, if it goes that way. Given all the h Gentleman's remarks about defence, he really cannot ha it both ways.

Mr. Nellist: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman must allow me to my bit in first.

Mr. Nellist: Policies can be hypocritical, not peopl

Mr. Speaker: Of course policies can be hypocritical, people; the hon. Gentleman is quite right. However, purpose of business questions is to ask the Leader of House whether he will consider making time available f week for a debate or for a statement. It is not the purp of business questions to make speeches that might be m if that debate were granted. It takes up a lot of time. [H MEMBERS: "Withdraw."] I am sure that the Leader of House did not call the hon. Member for Coven South-East (Mr. Nellist) a hypocrite.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): He did.

Mr. Speaker: If he did, will the Leader of the Ho withdraw it, please?

Mr. MacGregor: I shall certainly withdraw on point. Perhaps I can phrase it more accurately: attitude policy can reveal hypocrisy.

Sir Dudley Smith (Warwick and Leamington): In v of developments in the Gulf crisis and further to remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Windsor Maidenhead (Sir A. Glyn), will my right hon. Fri guarantee time for a debate, when it is appropriate an things evolve, if only to allow hon. Members on both s to stand up and be counted?

Mr. MacGregor: We had better wait and see w happens. It will be a matter for discussion through usual channels, if the need arises.

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse (Pontefract and Castleford the Leader of the House aware of the negotiations tak place between Yorkshire Water and York health autho about the possibility of transferring pathology serv from the health authority to the water authority? Wi arrange for the Minister responsible to investigate that put an end to this crazy system? May we have a staten about it next week?

Mr. MacGregor: I am not sure about a statement, I shall draw the hon. Gentleman's remarks to the atten of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for He As the hon. Gentleman knows, if he wishes to bring issue before the House, there are other opportunitie doing so.

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook (Orpington): Will my right Friend look more urgently into the speech made by first secretary in Washington? It was reported in the Br press on Monday and I drew it to the attention of my hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary on the same day. If correct, surely it should have been the subject o immediate statement to the House because it represe

change of Government policy. If it was not correct, it should have been disavowed immediately. Why has there been no action until now?

Mr. MacGregor: I have already explained the action I propose to take. In addition, I shall draw my hon. Friend's remarks to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): Will the Leader of the House allow time for a debate on the extraordinary lack of balance shown by the media during the past two or three weeks? Is he aware that night after night we have been bombarded with Tory Back-Bench Members, many of whom we have never seen before in the House? They have been able to make a three-week party political broadcast. The Leader of the House might think that his party was a recipient during that phase, but it is unhealthy in a democracy. It does not make for good debate when the Opposition are not even allowed to appear on television. In the interests of democracy, I should have thought that the Leader of the House would agree that we needed to look at the question of balance.

Mr. MacGregor: It is for the media to decide what they regard as important news events. If the hon. Lady feels so strongly about it, there is a remedy open to her.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): My right hon. Friend has been urged to announce a debate on the community charge. As one who voted for it, may I press him to do that? Clearly, as our new Prime Minister has said it needs to be looked at fundamentally, I am sure that many voters in the north of England would welcome an opportunity for it to be reconsidered.

Mr. MacGregor: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made our position clear this afternoon. We shall be spending two days next week debating community charge matters.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): May we have a statement next week on the serious condition of Polaris submarines? There are cracks in the cooling coils of the pressurised water reactors that operate them and they may be causing potential damage to the crew. In spite of a Ministry of Defence cover-up upstairs in Committee, we do not at present have a nuclear deterrent. As the Government are keen on supporting the United Nations these days, will they support the United Nations nuclear non-proliferation treaty, withdraw Polaris and scrap the Trident programme?

Mr. MacGregor: The hon. Gentleman knows that there is no question of that. Our view on submarines has been made clear. No submarine would be allowed to visit a civilian or a naval port or go to sea if it were considered unsafe to do so.

Mr. Michael Jack (Fylde): Further to my right hon. Friend's reply to the first question put to him by the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) about British Aerospace, 6,500 of my constituents will be worried about the company's announcement on Monday; but they will recognise also that it must decide its commercial future. If a statement is thought appropriate, will my right hon. Friend ensure that it contains a full reference to the many billions of pounds that the Government have already spent with British Aerospace, the support they are giving to export contracts, and the context in which British Aerospace views its future in terms of Britain's future defence policy?

Mr. MacGregor: My hon. Friend makes a number of relevant points, and they would certainly be for consideration in any statement or exchanges in the House.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): Will the Leader of the House find time next week for a statement on the enormous profits announced yesterday by the north-west water authorities, showing that they enjoyed a 667 per cent. increase in profits on the payments made by my constituents and others? Is it not disgraceful that taxpayers' money should be used to subsidise private companies in that way?

Mr. MacGregor: Consumers, shareholders and everyone else will benefit from the privatisation of the water industry, including from an environmental point of view.

Mrs. Dunwoody: But not consumers.

Mr. MacGregor: Consumers too; I made that clear. I see no likelihood of a statement being made on that subject next week.

Mr. David Porter (Waveney): In the light of the statement made yesterday by the European Commissioner responsible for fisheries that the EEC fishing fleet ought to be reduced by as much as 40 per cent., particularly in the North sea, will my right hon. Friend arrange for a statement to be made next week so that we may ascertain whether the British Government will move on the issue of decommissioning?

Mr. MacGregor: I understand my hon. Friend's concern. As he knows, I had ministerial responsibility for such matters for a number of years, and I well understand the situation. We are concerned about the decline in fish stocks, particularly in the North sea, and I am sure that my hon. Friend acknowledges that it is important to avoid overfishing. It is in the industry's long-term interests that that issue should be addressed.

We have taken the lead in the Community in pressing for improved conservation, and we understand that the Commission has just issued a communication identifying major problems in the Community fishing industry. However, we have no proposals yet, and that is relevant to whether or not there should be a statement next week. The Council of Fisheries Ministers will address the prospects for 1991 at a meeting on 19 December. Although the volume of fish landed this year is lower, its total value is higher. I cannot promise a statement next week, because it is important that we should have something to consider. Nevertheless, I agree that the House ought to debate the matter before the Council meeting on 19 December.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): May we have an early debate on Leicestershire health authority's intolerable decision to stop supplying free incontinence aids to elderly people in residential homes? Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that that decision has been denounced by Leicestershire Members of Parliament of all parties? Although I fully understand the problems that confront the health authority as a result of the Government's wicked cuts in the county's health provision, does not the Leader of the House agree that its decision is mean, nasty and cruel?

Mr. MacGregor: We are already spending some £30 billion on the health service, and an additional £3 billion will be spent next year. There have been massive increases in health service funding in recent years, so I reject the hon. and learned Gentleman's overall charge.

As to the particular issue that he raised, I cannot promise a statement next week because it is fundamentally a matter for the health authority. However, as the hon. and learned Gentleman has just shown, there are other ways of raising the matter in the House.

Mr. James Hill (Southampton, Test): Is my right hon. Friend aware of the tragic event that occurred in my constituency when a 17-year-old girl died from overdrinking in an illegal drinking den, known as shabangs? Will he find time for the House to debate the prosecution of such clubs, even to the extent of confiscating the property that they occupy? It is difficult for the police to prosecute drinking dens because the proprietors move from place to place, but we must at long last get to grips with this problem.

Mr. MacGregor: I am very sorry to hear of the incident to which my hon. Friend refers. He will know that a Bill relevant to the points that he makes is to come before the House, and it may be appropriate to raise such issues during its Committee stage. Meanwhile, I shall certainly draw his remarks to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary, but I see no opportunity to debate that subject in Government time next week.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): As there is to be a major debate next week on the poll tax, is it possible for the right hon. Gentleman to establish through the office of the Prime Minister, the Secretary of State for the Environment or the Secretary of State for Scotland exactly what refinements the Government have in mind? For example, will there be a facility for a 100 per cent. rebate? Surely it will be important in that debate for us to balance, if not the exact details, then the general thrust of the Government's policy on this matter against whatever variation on the rates to which the Labour party may be adhering at the moment and against the local income tax philosophy propounded by my party.

Mr. MacGregor: We have already announced several changes to the community charge, some of which still have to go through and require parliamentary action. We are taking action on two matters on Monday next week. If there are any further changes, I am sure that they will be announced at the appropriate time. Quite a lot of measures are already going through the House concerning a review of the community charge.

Mr. Rupert Allason (Torbay): When my right hon. Friend announced the business for next week, he omitted to mention a debate on tourism. Does he agree that such a debate is long overdue? Although many people, particularly those in my constituency, appreciate the greater weighting given to visitor bed nights in the new calculations for the standard spending assessment, does he not think that it is high time that we had such a debate? Will he assure the House that there will be a debate before the Christmas recess, bearing in mind that this important industry is now the largest earner of foreign currency for this country?

Mr. MacGregor: I agree with my hon. Friend abou industry's importance and the great successes that i had under the Government. There is a great de business for us to do between now and the Chris recess—next week's business shows that—and I canno any prospect of a debate on that subject in Govern time.

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): Will the Lead the House allow a discussion next week in Govern time on security and safety at Pinderfields general hos in my constituency? On Monday this week, two do were murdered in their office at the hospital. It w difficult to replace them, in their homes and in the se As my request for a statement could not be agreed to, we have a discussion on security and safety? If that ca take place in Government time, will the right Gentleman prevail upon the Secretary of State for H to make a statement to the House on the questi security and safety at Pinderfields general hospital?

Mr. MacGregor: I am sure that the whole House s my horror at what happened to the two consultant would wish to offer sincere sympathy to the relativ both. I cannot say that I can find time for a deb Government time next week on these matters. I shall to discuss with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of for Health whether a statement in that case wou appropriate. Of course, the hon. Gentleman knows there are other ways in which he can raise these ma

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): May we h debate next week on housing finance so that the Hou consider the serious abuse of the housing budget b former Ealing Labour council which is forcing unwa ted rent increases on council tenants in Ealing? T happening because the Labour council totally abuse system, as has been proven. This matter should be br before the House so that such abuses by the Labour can be fully examined at local level in Ealing before is any danger from it at national level.

Mr. MacGregor: My hon. Friend has made his effectively. I know that he will find other opportuni make it effectively at local level and national level a draw attention to any lessons that are to be learnt. I that the business of the House is pretty full next week I do not see much prospect of debating the matter

Mr. Derek Conway (Shrewsbury and Atcham): I Wednesday's debate, will my right hon. Friend h word with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of Sta the Environment and ask him to place in the Libr comparative chart showing, by local authority area spending this year as against last year and compa manpower levels? That will enable the House to s itself that the level and unpopularity of the comm charge are related to local government overmannin over expenditure, principally in areas such as Shro that are controlled by Labour councillors.

Mr. MacGregor: My hon. Friend makes a good The vast bulk of overspending takes place in Labou authorities. I will draw my hon. Friend's suggestion attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of St the Environment.

British Aerospace Factory, Preston

4.4 pm

Mrs. Audrey Wise (Preston): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the projected closure of the major British Aerospace factory at Preston, with enormous job losses of the order of 4,500."

The matter is specific because it relates to one company which is of unique importance to the local economy of the Preston area. If the closure and the redundancies go ahead, it will put a specific blight on my area. Preston borough council calculates the local unemployment could rise from 8 per cent. to as much as 15 per cent. as a direct effect. In addition, there would be a massive indirect effect on many other jobs, including retailing and all the service sector.

The matter is important for all those reasons and for the message that is given about British manufacturing when the largest British manufacturing company resorts to closures and to redundancies. The company should instead ensure continued work by making a transition from an over-reliance on arms production to civil aircraft and to other peaceful products, and the Government should help it to do so. It is important that the end of the cold war should be seen as an opportunity to expand civil aircraft production, for example; it must not become a disaster for my area. The matter is also important because British Aerospace is a reservoir of skills which must not be dissipated.

The matter is urgent because the House should express a view immediately, before decisions become irrevocable. There is an urgent need for the Government, the company and the unions to come together to find a constructive way forward. The unions would do that, but will the company and the Government? Until now the Government have refused to accept any responsibility for reductions in defence employment. A debate would give them the chance to take a new direction, although it is probably over-optimistic to expect them to do so. For the people of Preston, this is a matter of the utmost urgency. They will expect this House to debate the matter immediately.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Preston (Mrs. Wise) asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that she believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the projected closure of the major British Aerospace factory at Preston, with enormous job losses of the order of 4,500."

As the hon. Lady knows, I have to consider the criteria of Standing Order No. 20. I have listened with care to what she has said, but I do not consider that the matter that she has raised is appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 20. I hope that she will have other opportunities to bring the matter before the House.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Ordered,

That the draft Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 (Modification) Order 1990 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Chapman.]*

Orders of the Day

Development Board for Rural Wales Bill

Considered in Committee.

Clause 1

INCREASE OF FINANCIAL LIMIT

4.9 pm

The Minister of State, Welsh Office (Sir Wyn Roberts): I beg to move, That the clause stand part of the Bill.

The purpose of this single-clause Bill is to raise the present financial limit of the Development Board for Rural Wales from £100 million to £175 million.

During our Second Reading debate last night, there appeared to be some confusion in hon. Member's minds about the precise meaning of the words "financial limit". The function of the financial limit is to limit the public funding of the board so that the scale and nature of its activities can be re-examined by Parliament at regular intervals. The limit has been increased on two occasions —most recently in 1981 to £100 million under section 2(3) of the Industry Act 1981, which amended section 12(2) of the Development of Rural Wales Act 1976.

I should explain that section 12(2) of the 1976 Act set a limit of £25 million. That was raised to £40 million in 1980 and increased to its current level of £100 million by the Industry Act 1981. The financial limit established by the 1981 Act has remained in place by virtue of the fact that some £33 million of the board's national loans fund debt, which at one time counted towards the limit, was written off in 1986. Similar action was taken at the same time in respect of the English new town authorities.

At the current rate of expenditure, the financial limit of £100 million will be reached during the financial year 1991-92. Board expenditure counted against this limit comprises grant in aid, housing subsidies, advances from the national loans fund and other borrowing to finance the board's activities.

When raising a financial limit, it is customary to provide an increase that should suffice for five years. We therefore propose to raise the DBRW's limit from £100 million to £175 million.

The Bill specifies a single new limit rather than a two-stage limit with power to implement the higher figure by affirmative order. The latter approach was adopted in the Development of Rural Wales Act 1976, but the Industry Act 1981 removed the higher limit in the 1976 Act on the ground that further financial needs should be provided for in primary legislation rather than by order. The Government regard it is desirable to maintain consistency in this matter.

The main activities of the board are to provide financial assistance to business in the form of grants and loans, to provide sites and premises for industry, to assist in the marketing of the area for tourism and industrial purposes and in product marketing, and to provide advisory services and training. Assistance is available to enterprise in the land, food, craft, manufacturing, tourism and science sectors. In addition to its economic development activities, the development board supports a wide range of social development projects, including the provision of support

[Sir Wyn Roberts]

for the Welsh language and its culture and for the construction of houses for letting under the New Towns Act 1965 as amended in 1981.

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): The Minister is kindly fleshing out some of the matters that we discussed last night. Let me ask him a question related to the announcement by the Secretary of State yesterday. He may be able to answer it now. If not, perhaps he will ensure that it is answered later. Is the extra £1 million for the special rural action programme in 1991-92 included in the public expenditure White Paper for 1990 and, if so, under what head?

Sir Wyn Roberts: I shall certainly try to clarify that point. Last night my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State was speaking about the new money—Opposition Members are fond of talking about new money—amounting to £1·4 million which is to be available on top of this year's figure for the board in the coming year.

Dr. Dafydd Elis Thomas (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): We agreed all this last night. My advisers agreed with the Secretary of State's advisers that it was new money. The official Opposition could not work it out.

4.15 pm

Sir Wyn Roberts: I am grateful to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas). It is no wonder that we are such good neighbours. If it will bear repeating, there has been an increase in Welsh Office support for the Development Board for Rural Wales from £12·7 million to £14·1 million. I hope that that at least makes everything clear. There is no doubt that the development board has achieved considerable success in many of its activities. On Second Reading we covered many matters both inside and outside the board's remit.

There are no financial or manpower implications in the Bill. It will simply provide cover for the board's receipt of Government funds and for its borrowing. No change will be made to the board's powers and there are no implications for the European Community.

Mr. Barry Jones: Last night the Secretary of State skirted rather gingerly over the problem of housing. There is some classic evidence of the build-up of an intolerable situation. The problem is exacerbated by the emergence of the poll tax. For instance, in Brecon there are 601 applicants on the housing waiting list. On 3 October 1980 the housing stock was 3,962. In 1990 it is only 2,660, which is a 35 per cent. reduction. The others have been sold under the right-to-buy scheme. Up to 50 per cent. of housing stock where the right to buy applies has been sold.

The sale of council houses has been quicker in villages. There are some villages in which 100 per cent. of the stock has been sold. One example in the area is Tretower. It also has 55 housing applications.

Some of the houses that have been bought under the right-to-buy scheme are now being resold as holiday homes. If housing associations built 50 new properties a year, it would still take 12 years to house those presently on the waiting list. At present rates of new build becoming available, it will take 18 years to house those on the waiting list.

Mr. Richard Livsey (Brecon and Radno
Gentleman is referring to my constituency
heard him mention development board
Tretower almost half the conventional hous
second homes. There are no development bo
Tretower. Does the hon. Gentleman know
DBRW houses there are in Brecknock?
inadequate number. The hon. Gentleman is
local government housing stock. He is quit
per cent. have been sold off, but we need
remit of the DBRW housing stock to
flexibility.

Mr. Jones: I am certainly more than willi
the observations of the hon. Gentleman, wh
area well.

The local authority says that if it could
receipts, it could build 120 new houses.
chance of young people who live locally own
home, even with a 20 per cent. discount. I
evidence has been submitted to the Select Co
in Crickhowell 61 per cent. of the houses h
out of a total of 216 and that 84 houses rem
lucky if one house a year is available to be
people on the waiting list. Apparently
homeless families in temporary accommoda
potentially homeless families in the area.

Housing in rural Wales is an issue of prim
Everyone is aware of the problems and of
young marrieds and ordinary people who
against it. It is relevant to put it to Ministers
not yet tackled the problem effectively. Ma
not qualify for housing benefit because of res
told that there is no prospect of a
accommodation in the borough, that credit
not sufficient and that the authority still
receipts for improvements and repairs.

The health authority in the area previous
to rent. That is no longer the case because it
off. It is also said that Powys county authorit
of selling its properties in the same way.

The conclusion of the minutes of evidenc
Committee was, first, that there was a g
affordable housing for both rent and low-
—a need which has increased—and, secon
supply of both rented and low-cost
diminished. Thirdly, it was concluded that
rural initiative and the provision of free or
land either from the local authority or
planning process would help, but that the
recognition of the need to provide funding
provide new dwellings.

I hope that Ministers will respond t
problem of housing. It is a problem which
solved and to which they did not appe
themselves during yesterday's proceedings.
problem largely to the board, which has its

The Secretary of State's speech yesterd
three essential points. First, he endorsed
strategy. Secondly, he acknowledged tha
finances had been neglected. He bowed to
stumped up the extra £1 million. He said th
money. It was gratefully received. Thirdly
ducked entirely the chief problem in rural
—agriculture. Nowhere in the Secretary of
did I hear a sense of either strategy or

National Economic Development Council recently published a report entitled "Work in the Countryside", which predicted a fall of over 9 per cent. in the number of people engaged in agriculture in the United Kingdom during the next 10 years. It estimated that that would mean a loss of over 3,000 jobs in Wales. Some say that the number will be between 3,000 and 7,500. Already Ministers know and I know that the National Farmers Union in Wales is beating tracks to the door of the Secretary of State to tell him that it is deeply worried. No one can gainsay that. There is a sense of crisis in farming, particularly in the upland communities. Yesterday we did not have a response to that problem.

In Scotland a Minister for rural affairs has been appointed. Has such an appointment been considered by the Welsh Office? There is no doubt in my mind that the Secretary of State has a fine professional staff at his disposal. They are good. Some I know well and some I have worked with. Are there enough of them? Given the challenge facing the rural areas of Wales is not there a case for Ministers to devise a strategy and to come forward with some proposals that will show the people of Wales, the upland communities and those who live in rural Wales that the Government mean business? I want Ministers to consider seriously some initiatives. As I said last night, there is a call for more leadership in this sphere.

Mr. Geraint Howells (Ceredigion and Pembroke, North): If the day comes when the hon. Gentleman holds the reins at the Welsh Office, will agriculture be included in the remit of the Development Board for Rural Wales? Can he give the farming communities and the people of Wales that assurance?

Mr. Jones: I will not make policy on the hoof. The hon. Gentleman knows me too well for that. Nevertheless, I take the emphasis of his intervention. He knows that soon his party, mine and others will have to present their manifestos to the electorate. That is the moment of truth for Ministers as well as for Opposition parties.

I draw to the attention of Ministers the existence of a report by the Institute of Welsh Affairs. I commend it to them. It deals with the impact of inward migration, low birth rates, some heavy unemployment, low incomes and housing demand, which will be increasingly heavy towards the end of the century. It says that a strategy is needed. It wants plans to cope with the significant levels of housing demand. It says that priority should be given to raising low incomes. Ministers should study the report and I hope that it will help them to come to conclusions and to take initiatives.

Will the Minister of State promise to read the recent speech in another place of Baroness White of Rhymney, that distinguished ex-public servant who is respected and admired? The Minister will know that some years ago Lady White held the post that he now holds. She may be right to doubt whether Ministers can seriously influence Whitehall and European institutions about rural Wales. My conclusion is that Ministers do not have sufficient influence. They cannot. They are showing that they are overstretched and they may be showing that they are tired. I am saying that they are not giving sufficient leadership in this sphere, though the Minister must not take that as too serious a thrust today.

We recognise the importance of the increase in the financial limit to allow the current plans for funding the Development Board for Rural Wales to go ahead. That is agreed. We also recognise that an increase in the financial limit does not in itself provide any guide to the future level of expenditure for Government funding.

We are greatly worried by the Government's record on financial support to the development board. Its gross expenditure has fallen dramatically in real terms over the past decade, despite growing social and economic challenges in mid-Wales. Gross expenditure has fallen by nearly 15 per cent. in real terms since 1978-79. According to the 1990 public expenditure White Paper, gross expenditure, after taking inflation into account, is planned to fall by 8 per cent. this year. That is an example of short-sighted penny-pinching at the expense of the people of rural Wales.

Yesterday, I heard the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas) express concern about Trawsfynydd. I appreciated why he felt it necessary to make those remarks, but the Minister seemed laid back in his response. When the nuclear power station closes, the loss of high status jobs there will have serious consequences. Now is the time for the Government to plan for the future of Trawsfynydd. Will the Minister consider setting up a task force, or at any rate doing something now, long before the closure takes place? The Government should be preparing to take action now, rather than waiting until the closure, and only then giving the impression of animation and preparation. The consequences of closure will be considerable. The Minister must make preparations now.

Trawsfynydd lies amid some wondrous scenery, but not for miles around is there certainty of alternative work. A task force or similar body could consider also the needs of Blaenau Ffestiniog, which is still struggling to come to terms with the consequences of the loss of its staple industry, slate.

4.30 pm

Dr. Thomas: In presenting the case for Trawsfynydd, it would be helpful for everybody if the hon. Gentleman would spell out in greater detail what he would do were he sitting on the Government Front Bench.

Mr. Jones: The former Labour Government had a good record in these matters. The development agency and the development board stand ready to help communities such as Trawsfynydd and Blaenau Ffestiniog. I am urging the Government to show intiative and to give leadership. Matters in rural Wales are not as good as the Government imply. A town such as Blaenau Ffestiniog, at nearly 1,000 ft above sea level, with about 60 in of rain a year, isolated and with poor communications, requires urgent action. The same applies to other communities in rural Wales.

Rural Wales has been let down by the Government, with the freezing of child benefit, the breaking of the link between pensions and earnings, the cut in housing benefit, soaring mortgate costs, the hated poll tax, the loss of jobs in the Laura Ashley company and the plight of hill farmers. It is fair to say that rural Wales has had enough of the Conservatives, who do not care. A Labour Government will be elected and will restore the fortunes of rural Wales.

Mr. Livsey: There is little that I wish to say because much was said last night, but a number of points come to mind as a result of one or two matters mentioned this afternoon.

The Bill is narrowly drawn. I had hoped to be tabling an amendment now to increase by statutory instrument the funding available to the development board, but I am told that the Bill is so tightly drawn that we cannot table amendments to that effect. It would be good if in future one were able to do that. I hope that that proposal will be considered.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I am not sure whether the hon. Gentleman heard my opening remarks when I explained the two-tier system of raising the financial limit which pertained before 1981. It was decided that it would be good practice to require primary legislation to raise the limit, rather than being able to do so by order. I think that the hon. Gentleman and the rest of the House will agree that what we now propose—using primary legislation—is better practice than that previously pursued.

Mr. Livsey: The Minister explains the position precisely. Although we can use that procedure and have a debate, the matter is almost a fait accompli; we cannot change the board's remit.

Many speeches have been made outlining the desirability of giving the board other functions, such as those relating to agriculture, which are important. I hope that in future legislation can be brought in to give the development board more wide-ranging functions. Although we have had a sympathetic ear from the Secretary of State and the Minister, we cannot change the board's remit to include agriculture. We should have that opportunity in the future.

The Minister also mentioned tourism, over which the development board has only limited powers. If this had been a wider-ranging debate, I should have liked to table an amendment to give the board clearer functions in relation to tourism. I understand that those powers are fairly limited at present. In future, will the development board be able to assist in building hotels, which could be leased to local entrepreneurs in various parts of Wales to raise the standard of tourist accommodation? That subject could do with our attention. Tourism is a massive industry in rural Wales and should be stimulated. I believe that the development board might well have the ability to do that.

The hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) referred to housing, particularly in my constituency. The problems involved when young people try to find housing for rent are legion. The Government have ceased giving local authorities the ability to build houses for rent. Mid-Wales does not have an adequate housing association to provide sufficient housing to meet the demand. There is a Mid Wales housing association but it is extremely small, can obtain few resources and is thus unable to build adequate housing.

One of the development board's functions is to provide houses for key workers but, as I said last night, those houses are often empty for long periods in districts where the demand for rented housing is very great. It seems unsatisfactory that housing for key workers should be empty. That accommodation does not amount to a great deal of housing, and is but a drop in the ocean compared with the demand, yet even those few houses are empty.

I should like more flexibility. The de
should be able to let some of its housing
people coming in from outside the are
working in the area. There are families in
who have to live with their parents in
because the council housing stock has bee
Sometimes parents and a son and dau
perhaps two or three children have
three-bedroomed council house. That i
especially since those people work in th
The development board, with the Welsh
able to create a larger housing associati
—if that is the way the Government
housing for rent—to try to satisfy the in
for housing.

This enormous problem is causin
migration of some of our youngest and

Mr. Alan W. Williams (Carmart
colleagues, I welcome the increase in the
from £100 million to £175 million and
—it will rise from £12·7 million to £14·1

The annual report of the developmen
evidence that it has presented from tim
Select Committee on Welsh Affairs show
excellent work. Both the Development
Wales and the Welsh Developmen
interventionist agencies set up to stimula

Mr. Paul Murphy (Torfaen): By a Labo

Mr. Williams: Indeed. The agency
stimulate new jobs and enterprises an
stronger backbone in rural areas.

Last night we heard the Secretary of S
development board's budget of £12 millio
generate more than 1,000 new jobs or
ones. That works out at about £10,000
remarkably good value for money—the
multiplier effect means that other jobs liv
created by the new jobs.

Unfortunately, my constituency, de
second largest in Wales and very rural, i
the board's boundaries. The development
per cent. of Wales, but large parts of Gwy
Dyfed are not included. My predecessor
Carmarthen, Dr. Roger Thomas, felt str
I remember going on a trip in the mid-19
shadow Secretary of State for Wales, Ale
the hon. Member for Rhondda, and my
Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anders
Newcastle Emlyn to point out to the sha
State that Carmarthen district and the I
exhibit similar geographical features
included. Why is Lampeter inclu
Llanybydder? Why is Llandysul incl
Newcastle Emlyn? Why are not Llandeilo
included when Llandrindod and Llanwrty
all similar towns, but, by being excluded
the development board, they are missing
the benefits it can offer.

The WDA does excellent work in o
development board has a broader remit.
spend more of its money on social im
tourism facilities. I should like the boa

more money and broader boundaries. I hope that any future Labour Government—and even this Government—will consider redrawing those boundaries.

4.45 pm

In the past 10 years the problems of rural areas have become immeasurably worse, as my hon. Friend the Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) said earlier. Rural depopulation presents a severe problem. Young people are leaving our countryside and looking for work in the towns—sometimes not even in Wales but across the border.

We hear a great deal about inward migration in Welsh-speaking Wales, but that is only the other side of the coin. I was brought up in the countryside outside Carmarthen where it was taken almost as a fact of life in the 1950s and 1960s that small farms had to amalgamate, that jobs would be lost and that people would move into the towns. The Welsh language suffered as a result of that emigration. This downhill slide became a haemorrhage during the recession of 1979-81, when masses of manufacturing jobs were lost in rural areas and unemployment reached a peak of more than 20 per cent. in Dyfed. Between 1983 and 1988 unemployment there averaged 16 per cent.—that is what led to the haemorrhage of young people.

These people have been replaced and our population is growing, but it is different. I welcome retired people and people with new skills in craft industries, but that sort of population brings its own problems with it, particularly for the Welsh language.

Government policies in the past 10 years have hit rural areas disproportionately hard. There have been cuts in public spending on transport and road building. Not enough has been invested in road improvements or the surface of roads. There are terrible housing shortages. Rural villages contain run-down, unfit housing and there are acute problems of homelessness. We need far more public spending on housing, as the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey) said.

The poll tax has hit rural areas disproportionately hard, too. Small villages have few services, so they generally have low rateable values and contribute less to local government finance. In a sense the poll tax subsidises towns and penalises rural inhabitants. A gentleman in Llansawel wrote to me 12 months ago pointing out that his rates bill was just £80. He is a pensioner and he and his wife now have to pay poll tax of well over £300—yet they will enjoy no new services in their remote rural village. They have a very low income, but it is not low enough to qualify for a rebate.

Last night, several hon. Members mentioned low pay. The problem is at its worst in rural areas. I have here some information from the Low Pay Unit——

The Second Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Gentleman, but last night's was a Second Reading debate and therefore much wider. We are now on clause stand part, and low pay does not relate to the clause. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will make his remarks relevant.

Mr. Williams: Thank you, Miss Boothroyd. I stand corrected. I was, however, trying not only to make general points about rural areas, pertaining to my constituency in particular, but to explain how the development board work helps to counter the problems and why it should given more money.

Average male earnings in my county—Dyfed—a lower than those in any other British county and t Government have, as a matter of policy, halved the staff the wages inspectorate in the past 10 years. Mo interventionist policies are needed: the Government mu take much more direct action to help rural areas.

Spending on roads has also been cut. My constituen desperately needs a road linking the M4 to Ceredigion; the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, Nor (Mr. Howells) will know, the road to Llandyss Aberaeron and Aberystwyth has hardly been improved all in the past few years.

I have already mentioned the mass emigration of you people from Wales, and the inward migration which proceeding apace. Although I welcome the arrival people who contribute to the local economy and enrich t life of the area, it has caused serious problems for t Welsh language. I am, of course, very pleased when ne arrivals choose to learn Welsh, but the only real way retaining the language is to keep young people in o Welsh-speaking heartlands.

Dr. Thomas: I do not wish to stray out of order, and am well aware that the development board does not spen money on an education policy connected with language; does, however, spend money on a bilingual initiati programme to develop enterprise and business expertis Does the hon. Gentleman agree that that programm would be supported much more effectively in Dyfed an other parts of mid-Wales if he and some of his ho Friends desisted from undermining the local educatio authority policy for bilingual teaching there?

Mr. Williams: I am not undermining it; I am seekin—I fear that I am out of order now—to modify it to allo room for choice, and equal opportunities for the Wel and English languages in rural schools.

I wecome the increased allocations announced in th Bill, but far more needs to be done. Rural areas have ha a very rough time over the past 10 years, bu unfortunately, there will need to be a change Government before there is a change in their fortunes.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): Let me comme briefly on the latter remarks of my hon. Friend th Member for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams): obviously the were in order, Miss Boothroyd, or you would not hav allowed him to proceed. Let me tell my hon. Friend—a gently as possible—that some of the recent controversy i Carmarthen has been very destructive. Communities hav been divided quite unnecessarily on the subject of th language. My hon. Friend may realise in retrospect tha emotive words like "Stalinist" are not appropriate whe applied to Dyfed county council.

We all realise how explosive the language issue is i Wales. Welshmen are not divided on religious or ethni grounds, but the language division is very sharp, and w must not be shy to promote its use or to come to i defence.

Yesterday afternoon, a Conservative Member—talkin as English people often do about their language—suggested that it was less important to extend the BB World Service's Romanian, Hungarian and Bulgaria sections, which I consider crucial, than to extend Englis

[Mr. Paul Flynn]

language broadcasting. He received little support for that view, which typified the arrogance sometimes displayed by English speakers. If I were to start speaking Welsh now, Miss Boothroyd—as I have in the House on a number of occasions—I would be called to order; although other Parliaments can manage quite easily to deal with nine or 10 languages, in this Chamber the Welsh language has the same status as riotous behaviour, and I would be thrown out if I persisted in using it. This is now the only Parliament that Wales has, but perhaps the position will change when we have our own Parliament.

The people now migrating to Wales are different from those of my generation. In 1851, my forebear Morris Flynn and his family were stoned by the locals on their arrival in Wales. That was the greeting given to him and his family of five—three had been lost in the potato famine —as they walked down Bute street in Cardiff. As far as I know, there is no potato famine in Burton-on-Trent, and I do not believe that the Securitate in Guildford is persecuting the people and forcing them into Wales. People are coming to Wales looking for a better life, although many are leading a good life already. They are attracted by the beauty of the countryside and the lack of pollution.

None the less, we have the right to stand up and fight for our language. We remember what the old man of Pencader said about "this corner of the world", and we know that we are the only people who can defend our unique language. It is a shame that we should react with such venom to a foolish thing said by a frail, elderly visionary who gave so much to our country—although he certainly went too far. We should look to our visionaries, and to those who have the soul of our nation at heart, rather than indulging in the spiteful and petty controversies that have marred this last summer.

I hope that people in Carmarthen can come together, recognising the need to protect the Welsh language. The English language is not threatened; it is used throughout the world. Welsh, however, is in the perilous state in which all minority languages find themselves when all their speakers also speak a majority language. We must not be reticent; we must boldly defend the Welsh language.

My hon. Friend the Member for Carmarthen spoke of the poverty in the area covered by the development board. We hear very little about rural poverty. Let me briefly mention two issues. One is child benefit, which was recently increased. It is a shock to realise that at least 10,000 of the most deserving families in Wales will not receive the extra £1 because they happen to have suffered a bereavement or serious illness: that is in addition to the 192,000 families throughout Britain who will not receive the benefit because the Government will claw it back. The Government's was an extremely mean act.

The last great ruler who took an interest in the first born, King Herod, was a Thatcherite of the old school. One would not, of course, expect even the present Government to employ the measures that he adopted to save public expenditure.

As we emerge from the dark age of Thatcherism, I hope that policies to help families with children will emerge. The most deserving cases are being cheated outrageously by being deprived of child benefit. Rural housing is a continuing scandal. For the past 40 years, all Governments provided a wedge of housing in every
the Principality that was cheap to re
have disappeared altogether in many
housing, by providing the choice of ch
a balanced economy.

5 pm

My local authority, when it was
provided council houses in order to c
communities. Now, however, it is no
people who want to solve proble
Conservative ideologues whose minds
few simple ideas that drive them o
beyond all reason. There are no ho
reasonable price in some Welsh villages
hands they are sold. Villages are the
local labour and they become village
—already so common in the south of

The farming industry faces a crisis.
with all the development board's acti
that we take on the clause will hav
farming industry. At Question Time
crisis was referred to as a genuine crisi
wolf. My hon. Friend the Member f
Davies) said, rightly, that the crisis doe
of the farming community. The Mini
Fisheries and Food accused me today
farming community. It is already split.
East Anglia cultivate grain on huge p
them with huge profits and, in the case
Wales, if there are large harvests,
subsidies. I believe that my hon. Frie
cent. of the farming subsidies go to ve

Farmers have become the victims o
parties. We told them that the country
resources. They have been provided wi
more food. That resulted in this crisi
the past have become the diseases o
answer is not to increase subsidies gen
that they are distributed fairly. Many
now go to rich farmers should come to
industry faces many crises. I commend
policies. They would provide an ans
crisis. Production should be scaled dow
and voluntary agreements should be e
farmers——

The Second Deputy Chairman: Gentleman has had a very good run Members to remember that we are c stand part and the functions of the bo clause. This is not a Second Reading relates not to farming and agriculture limits of the board.

We have had a good debate; I ha allowing hon. Members to range wide Reading and, so far, today. Now, how to a halt. In future, hon. Members wil range as widely as they have done so fa part debate. The hon. Gentleman mu what he wants to say, which must be

Mr. Flynn: That is very kind of yo

The Second Deputy Chairman: I an

Mr. Flynn: On reflection, I must admit that some of my comments were tangential to the main purpose of the clause.

As for the money devoted by the development board to planning purposes in Wales, the Council for the Protection of Rural Wales published recently a splendid report. Newport suffers from a particular problem, in that we have a pushy neighbour called Cardiff. Its urban sprawl is spreading like a stain across the fields towards Newport. It has come right up to Newport's border. If Newport had been as permissive as Cardiff over its planning permission, it would no longer have a green ring around it. It would be possible to walk from the civic centre in Newport to the city hall in Cardiff without crossing a field and seeing a blade of grass.

I urge the Welsh Office to consider introducing green belts around our towns. Strangely enough, we do not have them in Wales. Such a ring around our towns would make them much more attractive. That would represent a very good use of the money that is provided for in the clause. We must provide a better future for development board areas and for every other rural area in Wales.

Dr. Thomas: I thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for the generosity that you have shown towards hon. Members.

Madam Deputy Speaker: It has come to a halt.

Dr. Thomas: I am aware of that. I do not intend to make another Second Reading speech today. One of the reasons why it has turned into such a wide-ranging debate is that we have so few opportunities to debate on the Floor of the House matters relating to Wales. I wish that we could have more such opportunities.

I agree with the Minister of State that it is good to hold primary legislation debates on the Floor of the House, during which we can consider the work of the development board and other agencies. I only wish that the Welsh Office could introduce additional primary legislation, including legislation on language policy. That brings me to the language issue, though in relation to the development board's work, not in relation to Dyfed's education policy. Nevertheless, I commend what was said by the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) about the activities of the hon. Member for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams).

The development board has deliberately focused cultural spending on language policy on business courses, business advice and bilingual handbooks. That has generated a good response in the western communities of Wales. The board's policy is to recruit, as members of staff, bilingual business advisers. The board has used the existing enterprise agencies to carry out work for it on a contract basis. It is therefore able to stimulate the development of an enterprise culture. That is an important part of our overall language development, conservation and enhancement policy.

The Welsh language is spoken by about 500,000 people. It is a minority language. I hope that it will become the language of business activity as well as of cultural activity, as well as being the language of all traditional forms of expression in culture and religion, as well as the language of the schools throughout the national curriculum. The language would then be able to survive in the complex world within which small cultures have to function. I pay tribute to the work of the development board, which stimulates the enterprise culture through the medium of the Welsh language. That is a very important part of its work.

Housing expenditure by the development board is limited to providing houses for key workers. The development board is not a general housing agency. Housing agencies have taken over the work of the previous new town development corporations. However, they have been giving their houses away. Houses in new towns have been sold rapidly. That creates housing problems. We need to match the decline in the role of local authorities throughout Wales and the decline in the role of the development board as the new town housing agencies' role is matched by the activities of Tai Cymru.

The Government need to look at the overall Welsh Office housing budget to ensure that the decline in available rented sector property is matched by the work of the housing associations. We need to look at the relevance of the clause to housing policy. There is a relevance to key-worker housing. That is a concept which can be seen to relate to a particular view of development. In the early years of development agencies, not just in mid-Wales but in other areas, activity seemed to be centred on in-moving large capital investment. That is important but it can sometimes be a diseconomy in terms of its effect on the existing network of local businesses. Incoming industries on a large scale can lead to a loss of jobs in the self-employed and small business sectors. We have seen that in some aspects of the development board's work.

Over the years, there have been positive critics of the board looking at supporting an economic, development strategy and at aspects of the strategy which might be improved. Those critics have stressed that the over development of Newtown and the growth town strategy has sometimes resulted in the appearance of overdevelopment in some areas and underdevelopment in others—*[Interruption.]* I see that the hon. Member for Vale of Glamorgan (Mr. Smith) agrees with me and I am sure that he will want to develop that.

I have mentioned Antur Dwyryd and Antur Teifi so I must mention Antur Penllyn and the activity in Bala. There we have a local authority and local entrepreneurs who are already successful on their own patch working with the development board to establish an atmosphere in which small local businesses can thrive. It creates an atmosphere in which young people can produce ideas for new enterprise, discuss their business plans and find support throughout the development of their business with the assistance of local banks, and so on. Many of us have argued for several years for that type of small scale networking enterprise and it is good to see the board pursuing it.

On Second Reading I received a firm answer from the Secretary of State about the future of the board. He made it clear that there would be no messing about between the Welsh Development Agency and the Development Board for Rural Wales. There will be a clear understanding that both authorities have a statutory responsibility and will have to work together. It was helpful to receive such a statement. However, I should like the Minister to deal with the possible privatisation of some of the board's activities. Concern has been expressed to me by those who follow the board's activities that there may be an intention to privatise existing complexes, industrial sites or other consultancy or development activities that the board has undertaken directly in the past. That may result in the

[Dr. Thomas]

officers responsible for such activities being less directly accountable. There have recently been internal management changes to the structure of the board.

Some of us are concerned that the social development aspect of the board's work is not receiving the high profile that it received in the past. We want an assurance from the Minister about the broad spectrum of spending. The social development money stands alongside the various directly enterprising schemes, building schemes and infrastructure schemes. We want an assurance that the social development money has the same value in terms of the board's policies as in the past. We have discussed that with the chairman and officials of the board and we shall have an opportunity to do so again fairly soon when the board will be visiting the House and giving us a presentation. However, I should be happy to have the Welsh Office view. It is important to emphasise the entrepreneurial and commercial activity of the board, but the social profile is also an important part of integrated rural development and we want it to be maintained.—*[Interruption.]* I am pleased to see that my hon. Friends the Members for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Howells) and for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey) agree with me.

5.15 pm

I want to deal with the board's spending in the northern Meirionnydd area and its relevance to Trawsfynydd. I am grateful to the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) for raising that issue again today. I want to see the Welsh Office taking a longer look at the issue in consultation with the Department of Energy and Nuclear Electric. None of us wants to see premature closure of a functioning plant. However, that plant can function as a Magnox nuclear power station only within the tightest possible constraints and controls on environmental policy as governed by the nuclear installations inspectorate. We do not want an artificial extension of the life of the plant. Therefore, as I said last night, as a result of the closure we shall be facing the loss of 400 to 500 jobs directly. Obviously, that has a multiplier effect and there will be about 1,200 job losses overall in the local economy.

The response to that is not to look for another major utility of that sort because the economy of north-west Wales—Gwynedd—has been dependent upon major construction projects and big utilities in cycles. That is not necessarily good for the economy in the long term. We need to look for a resource-balanced economy in terms of its ability to sustain itself internally and have a good relationship with surrounding economies and regions. The answer is to take further the approach already adopted by the development board in the way in which it has ensured the development of in-moving new capital investment and encouraged grass roots networking enterprise within local communities. We need to match that with adequate funding. We want to ensure that the development board becomes the lead agency in replacing job losses at Trawsfynydd. The board is able to do that. The WDA and Welsh Development International are important. We are hoping for further international investment beyond Clwyd and into Gwynedd as a result of the Wyn Roberts memorial expressway that is about to be completed.

The Development Board for Rural Wales has as members representatives from local authorities and works closely with local authorities. As we know, the Meirionnydd and Gwynedd districts do not have the resources necessary for industrial promotion in the same way as the board, which is a central Government agency. I should like the Welsh Office to tell us that they are entrusting the task of the lead agency in providing jobs in the Trawsfynydd and northern Meirionnydd area to the board and that the funding will be there to match it.

I was hoping to have teased some new ideas from the Opposition. Unfortunately, I have failed yet again. In the past we have suggested several different models and if Opposition Members have any ideas I am happy to give way.

Mr. Alun Michael (Cardiff, South and Penarth): I remind the hon. Gentleman that it was a Labour party idea in the first place. It would be better if he were less petty in his remarks.

Dr. Thomas: I do not wish to be drawn into the history of the development board, but it is well known that it was announced as an idea in 1970 by Viscount Tonypandy, who made that speech at a particular juncture in a general election campaign when Labour was looking for votes in west Wales. I have nothing against that, but we should put the record straight.

I am concerned now not about the future of the board but about finding new ideas from the official Opposition on how jobs can be replaced at Trawsfynydd. I offer the official Opposition that opportunity, but I hear nothing from them.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: When a nuclear power station reaches the end of its life, there follows the enormous task of decommissioning it. We are only just beginning to grapple with that problem in Berkeley. Nuclear experts say —this is why the City took fright when the Government tried to privatise nuclear energy—that that task is many times more difficult than was ever imagined. The budget involved is anything from £300 million to £1 billion, and for 10 years after the closure of a nuclear power station —perhaps even for decades—hundreds of jobs will be involved in its decommissioning.

Dr. Thomas: I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's intervention, because nuclear energy is one of the few issues on which we see eye to eye. The cost of decommissioning is unlikely to come within the budget of the Development Board for Rural Wales, but the hon. Gentleman is right to say that decommissioning will provide a certain number of jobs. From my discussions with Nuclear Electric and its predecessor, the Central Electricity Generating Board, my understanding is that decommissioning would not require the same number of people as are required to run a station, and that the specialised and dangerous work of decommissioning would perhaps require only 150 to 200 people—so 300 to 400 jobs would still be lost to the local economy, with the multiplier effect that I mentioned earlier.

Parallel models are available in the form of the British Steel Corporation—in Shotton in the constituency of the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones), and in areas of south Wales such as Ebbw Vale—and British Coal in the mining areas. In those cases, the existing utilities became agencies for replacement jobs.

The post-privatisation commercial structure of Nuclear Electric does not permit it to serve as such an agency, so we should look for ways of providing equivalent funding.

I want the northern Meirionnydd steel area to be treated as though it were an area subject to coal mining closures. Steel is a similar size of industry, and a comparable utility. I want the Welsh Office to signal tonight, or at a later stage, that it will respond positively to local activities in that respect. Recently, working parties reported to the district council, and the Antur Dwyryd agency produced its own plans for the 1990s which take account of the impact of decommissioning. We want an assurance from the Welsh Office that funding will be available within the development board's allocation to provide alternative jobs.

As for the current state of Welsh Office and development board crafts policies, had I not been participating in this debate, I would have joined a delegation to the Secretary of State on that very issue. However, I thought that it would be appropriate to be here instead, just in case Members on the Labour Front Bench tried to get at me again when my back was turned—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"]—as is their usual procedure.

Can the Minister say whether the crafts initiative or agency role by contract performed by Craft Consultants (Wales) Limited will continue in one form or another? There has been conflict between the crafts council for Wales and the DBRW and WDA as to who does what in promoting crafts. The former secretary of State produced a craft initiative as one of many that he devised, but I am not sure that its progress is as satisfactory as it might have been.

Competition of a kind that is not always useful exists in the provision of services to individual craft workers, as between the WDA and DBRW. Many of us are concerned about providing the right framework for all kinds of crafts development, very often in isolated locations, and some of us have had the privilege of visiting crafts persons on remote hillsides, where they produce items which end up being sold in Harrods. That is not always a test of quality, but at least it shows how widely Welsh crafts are now marketed. I want an assurance that there will not be an end to the crafts initiative and that a further attempt will be made to bring together the WDA and crafts workers so that they can co-operate more closely. The crafts council, through the agency work that it performs on behalf of its members, provides a voluntary support service.

We should not always look for clean lines to be drawn in our dealings with the rural economies, nor look just at the work of the WDA or DBRW—thinking that the only way to promote small businesses is through official bodies. We should consider also ways in which voluntary membership agencies such as the crafts council can undertake promotional and other work on behalf of its members, alongside and without duplicating that of public sector agencies. I shall be grateful if the Minister, having referred to the crafts sector as having a part in this debate, will make a response.

Mr. John P. Smith (Vale of Glamorgan): I welcome the additional money that is to go to the development board, as does the whole Committee. My right hon. and hon. Friends in particular welcome it, because the DBRW was Labour's brainchild. We introduced it, together with many other successful Welsh institutions, such as the Welsh Development Agency. We are glad to see extra money made available to tackle some of the well-understood and well-established problems that confront rural mid-Wales —in particular, those associated with maintaining the rural economies and stopping depopulation.

I want to sound a note of caution in respect of the way in which the money is to be spent. I represent a Welsh constituency that is predominantly rural and which—unlike many others in Wales—has significantly benefited from the kind of money that, under the clause, is intended for other parts of Wales. I want to highlight some of the problems that can be associated with successful development if it is not properly handled.

Two themes have been taken up by other hon. Members. First, we need to know exactly what the additional money will be spent on. Secondly—this point has come up repeatedly—it is necessary to co-ordinate the development board's work with the work of other agencies such as the WDA, local authorities and British Rail, to mention but a few in the public sector, and the private sector, which will play an important part in these developments.

Unless we are careful about identifying the needs that go with new investment in jobs and industry, we will create great problems. That may sound like a contradiction, but it is an important political issue for the House to consider in relation to the Bill. Since I have been the Member for Vale of Glamorgan, the area has managed to attract a disproportionate amount of inward investment, totalling £1·1 billion. That is one of the highest concentrations of inward investment in the world and is certainly the highest in western Europe.

5.30 pm

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): It is all to my hon. Friend's credit.

Mr. Smith: I refuse to take all the credit, but I am delighted by that investment. I recognise the role played by the economic development committee of the county council and the WDA, not to mention one or two by-elections. We welcome that investment and hope that there will be more, but it is creating problems and pressures in the rural part of my constituency. The three points of the economic triangle of success are Cardiff Wales airport, with the massive British Airways investment in precision engineering jobs—which we want to see in mid-Wales as well—the huge investment in the Ford plant in the north-west of my constituency, totalling almost £500 million, and the investment at Bosch, which will create nearly 1,300 new jobs.

The Second Deputy Chairman: Order. I am sure that the hon. Member will now relate his comments to the clause. Although his constituency is extremely important to him, it does not lie within the board's area.

Mr. Smith: Absolutely, Miss Boothroyd. I am glad that you have drawn my attention to that point. We must get across the point that, in spending this money, we must not make the mistakes that were made in the past. The development board should learn from past lessons and ensure that there is no repetition of previous mistakes.

Investment of this size will create a problem in the local labour market. We must ensure that there is trained, skilled labour to fill the occupations created in the rural areas or we will do one of two things: we will poach skilled people from existing employers in rural Wales or, worse still, we will add to the migration problem by encouraging

[Mr. Smith]

skilled labour from outside to go into the rural areas. Some people believe that that is already happening in our area. The development board should recognise the fact that, unless the training challenge is met, the problem will get much worse.

We must also consider the impact of investment on transport. I have personal experience of this in my area and I know that the problem will affect the area covered by the development board. I warn the Minister that, if we are successful and we attract investment, it will result in huge pressures on our transport network. Because of the new investment in Ford and elsewhere, it is dangerous and almost impossible to attempt to cross the road in the little village of Llysworney. The high volume of traffic and number of large stone-carrying and goods-carrying vehicles going through the villages make a bypass necessary. A bypass is needed also in Dinas Powys. The main trunk road through that local area, the A4050, needs to be upgraded. In addition, the rail line through the rural part of my constituency should be reopened.

Those are the transport needs of an area that has been successful in attracting development and investment. When considering the allocation of moneys and the encouragement of investment, the development board should ensure that it first has an integrated transport policy, or it will create problems like those in our area. The effect of investment on the local labour market and on transport is of considerable concern.

Housing is another important matter in rural areas. The depopulation problem in mid-Wales results largely from the inability of the indigenous population to purchase houses, in the absence of low-cost houses for rent, because of low incomes and lack of employment. The development board should bear it in mind that that can also be a problem in areas of considerable developmental success. People may be amazed to hear that, although we have been successful in attracting investment, in the rural vale—where the population is increasing—there is an acute housing shortage. Because we have had so much success, property prices are high. The indigenous community in relatively well-off communities, particularly young people, cannot afford to stay in their villages, although they may have good jobs in Cardiff to which they commute daily and their parents may be reasonably well off and live in rather expensive houses. The capital values of property in the rural part of my constituency are among the highest in Wales, but there is an acute housing shortage. The development board should carefully consider the impact of disproportionate investment concentrated in certain areas—a matter to which the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas) referred.

We need a housing strategy to provide low-cost rented housing for people in rural areas on low incomes and those who are out of work and for people in areas of success. My area is a popular place in which to live——

Mr. Derek Conway (Shrewsbury and Atcham): Under the Conservative Government.

Mr. Smith: No, under a Labour Member of Parliament. The problem in my area is the opposite of the problem in some rural areas. The region is so popular that, I admit, some parts of my constituency are referred to as the filing cabinet of England. Civil servants who come down from Whitehall to the Welsh Office, the Royal Mint or the Inland Revenue know that my constituency is a nice place in which to live.

The Second Deputy Chairman: Order. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman's constituency is an excellent place in which to live, but he should get back to the geographical area that we are debating.

Mr. Smith: I will get back to the important point at issue. We have referred to the pressure that investment places on the labour market, to the effect on the transport infrastructure and to the importance of having a transport policy if we are to attract investment. We have also referred to housing. Another important point is that once we succeed in attracting investment to an area, we must ensure that it is followed by balanced development.

Other hon. Members have referred to the pressure on planning, to intrusions into the green belt and to the destruction of the countryside. In my constituency, there is a planning application for a golf course, for a new town, for a ski slope or for a race track on almost every open site and on almost every green field. Yet people have paid to live in this area because they want to enjoy a certain quality of life. The irony is that it is an area where such plans and development are not wanted, while we are crying out for development and investment—and doing what we can to attract it—in nearby conurbations.

I hope that the Minister will bear it in mind that when the board seeks, through strategic intervention, to attract investment and rural industrial activity, such development cannot be left to the free market. If we are to have economic and industrial growth, we must have the corresponding infrastructural changes to ensure that the quality of people's lives is not destroyed. There is a danger of that happening in my constituency, which is predominantly rural, and the environment will be under threat unless we get our act together. I am confident that, with institutions such as the Development Board for Rural Wales, we can do that.

Like other hon. Members, I want to draw the attention of the House to the importance of agriculture in the development areas. Some hon. Members seemed to imply—I am sure not intentionally—that the agricultural crisis in Wales is restricted to the hill farms and to the family farms which are typical of the catchment area of the board. I must remind hon. Members that the crisis goes beyond that. It affects the livestock and dairy farmers in some of the richer and more influential farming areas such as the Vale of Glamorgan. I can assure the House that the crisis in livestock prices and high interest rates affect all farmers.

Other hon. Members have said that only some sections of the farming community benefit from the huge farming subsidies, but that is not quite the case. By and large, it is not the farmers, but the retailers—and especially the five large supermarket chains—who do well out of the subsidies and they often fail to pass on the benefits to the consumer.

I hope that, as the Development Board for Rural Wales goes from strength to strength with its additional expenditure, it will take steps to meet some of the problems to which I have referred. I hope especially that the board will tackle those problems in rural areas, such as the one that I represent.

5.45 pm

Mr. Win Griffiths: In the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Vale of Glamorgan (Mr. Smith), we have heard more analogies than there are sidesteps in a rugby match. I am sure that he will be known as "Smith the Analogy" as he wove his story so well. I could almost imagine that the Vale of Glamorgan had been transferred to mid-Wales.

Although my constituency lies outside the area covered by the Development Board for Rural Wales, I speak with an interest in mid-Wales because I was brought up in the town of Brecon, which is now in the constituency of the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey). My family history illustrates the need for the board and for the welcome increase in the money that it has available to finance the promotion of economic activity and, thereby, the social well-being and prosperity of mid-Wales. My parents had seven children; five of us are currently employed outside mid-Wales. The interesting point is that the two sisters who still live in the town of Brecon are married to men who came from outside mid-Wales.

Last night, the Secretary of State referred to the fact that, in the past decade, the population of the area has increased: inward migration has exceeded outward migration. That is only the beginning of a reversal of the trend that has been seen for generation after generation. It is important for the board to have its funds increased, because it will have to make up for generations of lost population and lost economic activity.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: I noted that my hon. Friend said that he was one of seven children and that only two of them now live in his home town, which is in a rural area. I am in an identical situation. I, too, am one of seven children and only two of us now live in Carmarthen. The other five now live far away—some outside Wales. That is at the heart of the problem of rural depopulation and the result is the decline of the Welsh language. Once people move away, they and their children will no longer speak Welsh, so the language goes.

Mr. Griffiths: I thank my hon. Friend for his intervention because it strengthens the case for the activities of the board to be extended in mid-Wales. My hon. Friend mentioned the Welsh language and the difficulties that it faces after years of decline. I believe that the board uses part of its budget to support the Welsh language. When I read the annual report of the board, I could not see just how much money went to support the Welsh language and I hope that the Minister can tell us.

Sir Wyn Roberts: If the hon. Gentleman looks at section 26 of the Development of Rural Wales Act 1976, he will find that it enables the Secretary of State, rather than the board, to devote money to social purposes, one of which is the promotion of the Welsh language. Under that section, the Welsh Office supports some of the activities in connection with the Welsh language.

Mr. Griffiths: I thank the Minister for that intervention. I was referring to the development board's annual report which mentions support for the Welsh language. I was brought up in Brecon, which is an English-speaking town, although in the 1950s Welsh was still to be heard in farming communities 10 miles west of the town.

Mr. Livsey: It still is.

Mr. Griffiths: Yes, it still is, in places such as Trecastle. Steps should be taken to help families with children who go to bilingual schools but who do not speak Welsh at home. Our children managed magnificently until the age of 11: our friends told us that, had they not known that my wife and I were monoglot in English, they would have assumed that our children were from a Welsh-speaking home. But our children had distinct problems after the age of 11 simply because there is not enough literature in Welsh to enable children to be educated easily in the subject at secondary level. When my daughter had to do a school project on Mozart, she had to read everything in English and then write everything in Welsh. The Development Board for Rural Wales could kill two birds with one stone if it made it its job to support printing in the Welsh language because it could then provide the books that are needed in Welsh schools, which are not available at present.

Dr. Thomas: The development board has assisted Mozart on a number of occasions. It has sponsored various concerts, including an excellent one at Llangollen international eisteddfod.

Mr. Griffiths: I am pleased to hear that, although I hope that the Minister will be able to tell us whether the development board could become actively involved in the provision of Welsh books for primary and, particularly, secondary schools. They are desperately needed.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will have heard of the Welsh Books Council, which receives £400,000-plus from the Welsh Office and whose main concern is the publication of Welsh language books. Other organisations supported by the Welsh Office are also concerned with the production of educational textbooks.

Mr. Griffiths: I thank the Minister for that answer, but I beg him to examine the possibility that, as part of its activities in supporting the Welsh language, the development board could become more involved with the other bodies in Wales that are producing Welsh language books. That could improve matters greatly.

I do not want to go over the ground that has already been covered on the need to provide housing at reasonably low cost in rural areas. Instead, I want to emphasise the need for rented accommodation. The Minister will know that the Government's mortgage-for-rent scheme has not had a very high take-up in mid-Wales. There are two reasons for the low take-up of what, on the face of it, looks like a bargain. First, despite all the inward investment that has taken place, despite the flourish of activity that surrounded the establishment of the development board and despite the fact that it is to be provided with the extra money that it needs for its activities, the feeling still prevails that the rural economy is fragile. We need to do more, not just through the development board, but through all apsects of Welsh Office policy, to promote the rural community in Wales.

Secondly, we must bear in mind the fact that many of those living in rented accommodation were not prepared to take the step of buying because they feared that they would not be able to sell if they wanted to move to another job. That emphasises one of the difficulties caused by high housing costs and high interest rates, which are bedevilling the expansion of the economy. Next year we shall have a

[Mr. Griffiths]

downturn in economic activity which will make the work of the board more difficult and the rural economy more fragile.

Some hon. Members seem to have set on one side as almost irrelevant the work of the board in agricultural support, saying that there are other ways of supporting agriculture in Wales. It seems to me that a vital part of the board's work is in promoting agricultural production—finished and new products that can be made on the farm or off it—thus making a significant contribution to the income of the Welsh farmer. It is obvious that it will become more and more difficult for Welsh farming families to make sufficient money out of farming alone. That is why the board's activities are crucial in the provision of agricultural support—in the promotion of the production of new cheeses or whatever. There is so much that can be done. That is why I welcome the increase in the limit on the board's expenditure.

I am pleased that a Government who opposed the creation of the board should have recognised the usefulness of its activities in mid-Wales and I hope that the board will continue to flourish, because it will be needed for a long time to come.

Mr. Martyn Jones (Clwyd, South-West): We are discussing the increase in the board's financial limit from £100 million to £175 million. On Second Reading, hon. Members on both sides of the House acknowledged the good work that the board and its staff have done. As my hon. Friend the Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths) said, it is somewhat ironic that Conservative Members should now be supporting intervention in industry. They could not have done that in the past—at least, not openly—and one wonders for how long they will continue to do it. Nevertheless, it is nice to know that they support intervention as it is so obviously necessary to the rural areas of Wales.

Much of the money that will be made available under the Bill will be spent on maintaining jobs and blunting the effects of the recession which is hitting the areas of rural Wales covered by the development board. Such help would also be extremely valuable elsewhere, outside the development board's area. Had such help been available in my constituency, Biddulph's might not have been closing its factory in Denbigh this week, with the loss of 50 jobs. We could be maintaining jobs in an area which is just as rural as most of the board's area. In terms of rurality, the Vale of Clwyd and Glyndwr within Clwyd are little different for Brecon, Cardigan and other areas within the board's remit.

6 pm

On Second Reading, the Secretary of State said that he would look at the boundaries in 1991. Obviously, that will require more money. I urge him to try to extend the boundaries into Clwyd, Glyndwr and Gwynedd within this year, which means that the £175 million is probably inadequate and that we should vote for more money tonight. I urge him also to give development area status of some kind to those regions so that we can attract Euro-money, which would get him out of the financial hole in which he would find himself if he extended the boundaries before 1991.

The Secretary of State said that he was seeking way in which to strengthen rural communities. T probably best done by supporting agricultur removing the effects of the deregulation of bus tra which is a major problem, and by encouraging rathe discouraging post offices in villages. That cannot b by market forces—it can be done only by intervention. As I have said, hon. Members are, in supporting state intervention by their support Development Board for Rural Wales. That encouraging trend and I hope that it will continue.

Mr. Murphy: This has been a wide-ranging debat simple Bill. The clause would extend the financial li £100 million, which was set in 1981, to £175 million. that hon. Members on both sides of the House are that that limit is not a limit of grant and that it also borrowing from the national loans fund, as w Treasury guarantees.

Opposition Members welcome the extension limit to £175 million. It interests me in particular be at one time, my constituency had within its boundar Cwmbran development corporation. At that time the only institution of its type within Wales, and th town development corporations sprang directly fro one in Cwmbran. Many engineers, architects and went to mid-Wales to set up the interesting exper My hon. Friends the Members for Clwyd, South (Mr. Jones) and for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams) referred to the need to extend the boundaries Development Board for Rural Wales into Carmarth Clwyd. I hope that the Minister will take that po board and report back to us.

According to its annual report, the objective Development Board for Rural Wales is to encoura creation of a self-sustaining economy in its area, together with housing, is a crucial matter in mid My hon. Friends the Members for Alyn and Deesid Jones), for Vale of Glamorgan (Mr. Smith) a Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths) and the hon. Member for and Radnor (Mr. Livsey) referred to the important of the board's work, which the £175 million will co the creation of housing in mid-Wales.

When I again read the report of the Develo Board for Rural Wales I was surprised to note that i that housing continues to cause difficulties in rural That must be an immense understatement. Hon. Me have referred to the importance of the development in tackling that problem. They rightly referred problem of the affordability of private housing wit area covered by the development board. For instan year about 1,300 new private starts were made in tha However, the average Welsh house price is about £ there are high interest rates, rural incomes are lowe their urban counterparts, and house prices are ab per cent. higher. The problem of getting a private ho people who live in those areas is becoming worse day.

Of course, the development board has to alongside local authorities. There are six district c within the area. All six of them have been losers battle involving the poll tax and the unified busine Local authorities suffer that burden and the loss o position as housing suppliers in Wales. I shoul thought that that responsibility would rest wi development board. The hon. Member for Brec

Radnor rightly said that the development board should take over the functions of housing associations and work closely with them in mid-Wales. That is not happening.

Last year in the development board area, 801 local authority and housing association houses were sold and only 222 starts were made. Unquestionably, that has given rise to homelessness in the area. Also, 329 families were officially homeless in the middle part of Wales. Tai Cymru, to be fair to it, instituted research into what should happen with housing in mid-Wales. It came up with the inevitable result: there is much hidden homelessness in mid-Wales and the waiting lists with local authorities and the development board are probably much higher than the official figure of 6,000 people. As the Minister is aware, district councils in Wales have said that 6,000 more homes should be built within the Principality and many of them in the area of the development board.

Mr. John P. Smith: My hon. Friend has rightly referred to losses to Wales and losses in Wales. Will he take this opportunity to agree that the tragic loss this week of one of my constituents, Mr. Cliff Jones, arguably one of the greatest outside-halves to come from Wales——

The Second Deputy Chairman: Order. That has nothing whatsoever to do with the clause stand part debate. The hon. Gentleman will resume his seat.

Mr. Smith *rose*——

The Second Deputy Chairman: Order. The hon. Gentleman will resume his seat. This is a clause stand part debate relating to the financial limitations of the board. The matter to which the hon. Gentleman was referring does not relate to that subject.

Mr. Murphy: I take the point that was made by my hon. Friend the Member for Vale of Glamorgan.

Whole communities are breaking up because of the lack of affordable housing in mid-Wales. My hon. Friend the Member for Bridgend referred to new housing development by the board which, in a sense, was used as a guinea pig by the Welsh Office and by the Government in respect of the rents-into-mortgages scheme. My hon. Friend told us that that has flopped and that, out of 1,400 tenants of the development board in Newtown, only 35 applications have been received. In Scotland, out of 123,000 tenants of similar boards, only 42 have applied. The Government's idea, which was to finish off all sorts of public housing in the centre of Wales, has flopped.

Section 18 of the Development Board for Rural Wales Act 1976 refers to housing subsidy. At the Conservative party conference, the Minister for Housing and Planning referred to the withdrawal of housing subsidy from local authorities and from new towns during the next few years. I hope that the money that we are discussing will not mean that subsidies for tenants in the mid-Wales development area will suffer as a consequence of what might or might not be Conservative party policy in the months and years ahead. Local authorities, the development board and Tai Cymru—Housing for Wales—should try to arrest the crisis in Welsh rural housing.

For instance, they should consider the problem of second homes, which has been mentioned several times in the past two days. They should also consider the planning laws and ensure that planning permission for second homes is carefully examined. Development land should be designated to house local people, not to make property developers richer. They should set up housing help centres in mid-Wales. They should have a crash programme on homelessness and certainly should ensure that the capital receipts that local authorities and the DBRW receive from the sale of local authority houses go back to them so that when houses are lost through the right-to-buy scheme they are replaced with new houses for people in the centre of Wales who look to the board to house them.

We have highlighted some of the problems in mid-Wales. We welcome the increased resources that have been allocated to the board, but we are convinced that the extra £175 million would be put to best use by a Labour Government, as a Labour Government set up the board in the first place.

Sir Wyn Roberts: With the leave of the House, I will reply to the debate. In all, 10 hon. Members have spoken in this clause stand part debate. If there is an excuse for the wide-ranging character of the debate, it is that, as I understand it, we propose not to have a Third Reading debate.

I begin by dealing with the speech of the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones). I seriously suggest that he reads again what my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said at column 936 of *Hansard* about the funding of the special rural action programme. Similarly, at column 967 my right hon. Friend dealt clearly with the interest taken in the problems at Trawsfynydd. The problems are some years ahead but the north-west Wales training and enterprise council, although only recently established, has begun exploratory discussions.

Dr. Thomas: I appreciated what the Secretary of State had to say about the training and enterprise council, but there is also a role for the development board and for additional funding to meet head-on the crisis that will emerge in the area in the next five years.

Sir Wyn Roberts: We certainly expect the efforts of the training and enterprise council and other agencies such as the Development Board for Rural Wales to provide alternative jobs to be intensified in the intervening period.

The hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside said that the gross expenditure of the DBRW had declined. He chose some curious years as examples of its expenditure. He chose 1978-79 and 1979-80, when there was exceptionally high expenditure at Newtown, but taking the period from the board's inception one sees that there has been an increase of some 15·4 per cent. in real terms in the board's gross expenditure. Similarly, from 1980-81 to 1990-91 there has been a 20 per cent. increase in real terms in the board's gross expenditure.

Several hon. Members talked about housing. Indeed, it would be easier to name those who did not refer to it. The Welsh Office has been aware for some time of the problems faced by people in rural Wales in securing affordable homes. I am glad to say that several measures are being taken. Although housing is an ancillary responsibility of the development board, hon. Members will be aware of the growing role of Tai Cymru, or Housing for Wales. It has directed about £25 million—no less than a quarter of its resources—to be spent by housing associations in rural areas this financial year. This year we have made available additional allocations or credit approvals totalling £2·8 million to rural district councils with severe second home problems to enable them to buy dwellings for rent or resale or to purchase land for housing development. To help

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mitigate the effects of inward migration and second homes, public sector landlords in national parks and certain designated areas may impose conditions on the resale of dwellings sold under the right-to-buy scheme. I did not agree with the hon. Member for Torfaen (Mr. Murphy), however, when he implied that we should deny the right to buy because houses bought under the scheme are somehow lost to the housing stock. He knows as well as I do that that is not the case.

6.15 pm

Mr. Murphy: The Minister completely misinterprets what I said about the right-to-buy legislation. I did not imply that the right to buy would not continue or that it was not a good thing. I said that the receipts from the sale of those houses should go back to the local authorities or the development board so that they can build new houses for those on the waiting lists in mid-Wales, who number over 6,000.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Unless things have changed drastically, the current year's receipts from right-to-buy sales can be used by the authorities to which they are paid.

Within the next few months we shall issue planning advice on land for low-cost housing in rural areas following consultation last year. Last year, Housing for Wales launched a rural housing initiative to assist local people, especially young people, to find suitable homes which they can afford in their own communities. The initiative is being run on a pilot basis in 31 villages across rural Wales. The majority of homes are being provided on shared ownership terms with a pre-emption right eventually to return the home to the relevant housing association.

More significantly, as the hon. Member for Torfaen mentioned, earlier this month Housing for Wales published the results of two vital research projects on the nature and extent of the need for housing in rural Wales. The second of those reports, which dealt with the importance of affordable housing for young people in determining their decision to remain in their home communities, goes further than housing issues. Housing for Wales intends to call a working conference early in the new year to discuss the findings of both studies. It will draw on the expertise of organisations with an interest in the quality of rural life.

You will probably not allow me to stray far on the community charge, Miss Boothroyd, but it is perhaps worth noting that within the development board's area some 29,000 chargepayers are obtaining transitional relief averaging £27 per person. The House will have heard what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister had to say this afternoon about a review of the community charge.

Many references have been made to agriculture but, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State pointed out on Second Reading, agriculture is the direct responsibility of the Welsh Office agriculture department. Of course, we recognise that it is not an easy time for Welsh livestock producers. That is why we have introduced measures to deal with the position. Again, Miss Boothroyd, you will not allow me to stray far into what we have done for the beef sector by way of intervention. Neither would you allow me to say much about the way in which brought forward the two advance payments annual premium, and so on.

Mr. Win Griffiths: You will recall, Miss Bo that I raised the issue of agricultural support development board's annual report there is a entitled "Support for Agriculture". The point ma report and the reason why we raised it is that, recognise that direct income support for farmers i another part of the Welsh Office, the developme has a responsibility to promote the industry and for farmers by other means. That is why we shou hear something from the Minister about that.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Perhaps, Miss Boothroyd, allow me to say a little about some of the income flowing into the rural community as a resul measures to which I have referred. Intervention in sector alone is costing the Government some £11 week. Welsh sheepmeat producers have a cash flo of nearly £25 million from the decision to bring the two advance payments of sheepmeat annual p Obviously, there are other developments in the sector. The hill livestock compensatory a payments alone total some £33 million.

The Second Deputy Chairman: Order. The M trying to be helpful to the House, but he is g deeply into agriculture. I am looking at the repo is taking us too far into another Dep responsibility.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I am seeking to say——

Mr. Win Griffiths: On a point of orde Boothroyd. I am grateful for your intervention pointed out, the Minister was exceeding his role. I I asked what the Development Board for Rural W doing to support farmers. It has a remit to supp That is what I want to know.

The Second Deputy Chairman: That is not a order for the Chair to resolve.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I shall come to the hon. Ge point. I was simply prefacing my answer to pointing out how much money was being po agriculture. The HLCA payments alone are wo £33 million. Apart from all that, agricultural g subsidies, excluding intervention and so on, a some £100 million a year to Welsh farmers. Ag background, hon. Members are well aware that t the development board is to encourage indus activities which are ancillary to agriculture. It function of the board to administer grants and That is the responsibility of the Welsh Office. Ma activities covered by the development board are to agriculture and, indeed, life in general in community which they serve.

Tourism has been mentioned——

Mr. Alan W. Williams: May I take up the po by my hon. Friend the Member for Bridg Griffiths) about agriculture and the responsibili development board? There is a crisis in ag particularly regarding lamb and beef. Even wor 30 per cent. cuts in export subsidies being negotia general agreement on tariffs and trade round

talking about small farmers. What is the Minister doing and what more can we do by using the development board to help and sustain the rural economy? Small farmers are critical to the rural economy. Is there not a case for a massive expansion of the board's role in supporting small farmers?

Sir Wyn Roberts: We all sympathise with that point. Indeed, I began my statement with an appreciation of the situation in agriculture. I also said that the administration of support for farmers in Wales was the prime role of the Welsh Office agriculture department, as in England it was for the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. There is a role for the development board. Its function is not to provide grants and subsidies direct to farmers—there is separate administration for that—but to encourage and promote businesses ancillary to agriculture and life in rural areas. I am sure that that is where its main thrust should be.

Mr. Geraint Howells: The Minister's positive approach has been welcome, in mid-Wales by the western initiative drive which has taken place in the past few months. It will bear fruit in the months to come. May I suggest that area offices should be opened in Ceredigion, Meirionnydd, Brecon and Radnor—the development board has opened a new office in Machynlleth which has been a great success in Montgomeryshire—so that young entrepreneurs and small business people who are keen for advice can go to a local office under the jurisdiction of the development board?

Sir Wyn Roberts: I note the hon. Gentleman's point. He will know that those offices cover rather more than the interests of farmers. Nor would it be appropriate for the development board to have specific powers that are not available to assist farmers in other parts of Wales. I am sure that the board will also note his point.

I was about to say a word or two about tourism. Although the development board has a role in tourism, it recognises that the main role belongs to the Wales tourist board. There is collaboration between the two boards. The section 4 scheme administered by the Wales tourist board began operating in 1971 and has greatly assisted tourism throughout Wales. Since then, in the development board's territory alone, nearly £8 million worth of grant and loan assistance has been provided, supporting more than 420 projects with a capital cost of £38 million, creating or safeguarding about 1,550 jobs.

On Second Reading last night, and again today, the hon. Members for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams) and for Clwyd, South-West (Mr. Jones), to name but two, made a plea for an extension of the board's area. I can only think that that is prompted by a lack of full awareness of what the Welsh Development Agency is doing. It plays an active role in furthering the economy of rural Wales and that part of rural Wales which comes under its jurisdiction. The effectiveness of the WDA's activities in rural areas is demonstrated in a variety of ways. It has 1·7 million sq. ft. of factory floor space, providing jobs for more than 5,000 local people. More than £4 million in private investment has been secured since the launch of the rural buildings conversion grant scheme, resulting in the creation of more than 1,000 jobs. The DRIVE scheme has generated substantial private sector interest, leading to private investment in excess of £2 million.

I could expand considerably on the work of the WDA in areas outside the remit of the DBRW. However, I shall resist that temptation, mentioning only one point that has been raised in the debate—the support that the WDA gives to Menter a Busnes, the initiative to encourage enterprise among Welsh speakers. There is close collaboration between the board, the WDA and the Wales tourist board.

6.30 pm

The hon. Member for Carmarthen referred to the availability of the social powers in the DBRW area. It is important to recognise that there is no legislative gap. The Welsh Office has the power to assist social development schemes throughout Wales, and some £3 million was spent on such measures last year. We have already referred to the Welsh language and the support given to it under section 26 of the Development of Rural Wales Act 1976, but that section gives the Secretary of State power to support the Welsh language in Wales. I know that that will interest the hon. Members for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) and for Bridgend, both of whom referred to the matter.

Mr. Win Griffiths: Does the reference in the annual report of the DBRW to measures to support the Welsh language include initiatives taken by the Welsh Office rather than by the board itself?

Sir Wyn Roberts: Like many other organisations in Wales, the board is quite capable of doing—and has the power to do—whatever is appropriate in connection with the Welsh language. I am sure, without specific knowledge, that both the WDA and the DBRW would support a business venture with the language at the core of its operations.

Dr. Thomas: This is an initiative within the board, strongly supported by the WDA. It has been effective in obtaining a response within the bilingual community in western Wales and from a broader base of opinion.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I am grateful to the hon. Member, who referred to the craft initiative and asked for further information on it. The three-year period of the initiative comes to an end at the end of the financial year. If none of the parties to the agreement gives notice, the agreement allows for the current funding arrangements to continue. An early evaluation of the initiative is under way, at the request of those involved, and talks are also taking place about what support might be offered to the craft industry in the next financial year.

The hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside foolishly accused the Welsh Office of not having a strategy. Who does he think is behind the board? It is not for us to second-guess it, but its policy is clear, as the hon. Member for Torfaen said. The objective of our policy for mid-Wales is to create a thriving, self-sustained, market-based rural economy. We have witnessed a major improvement in the climate allowing private enterprise to flourish. The development board's policies complement the work of the private sector.

The development board can be viewed as a facilitator acting in a catalytic role for manufacturing industry and helping to create jobs, reduce unemployment, encourage growth, improve the balance in population and achieve higher income. Its key objective is directed towards the expansion and diversification of the economy of mid-Wales. Its focus is on encouraging and strengthening the private sector within its area. I was delighted to hear

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the suggestion made by the hon. Member for Merionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas) that we should privatise as much as possible of the board's activities.

Our policy has helped to create an environment in which young people can find new jobs in manufacturing industry, in tourism and in the service industry, providing a much greater diversity of employment opportunities. Achievements in this help towards the creation of a much-improved quality of life for local people as well as attracting inward investment. All this helps to create a new confidence in the region.

To those who have pressed me for an extension of the board's work, I can only say that it has a full agenda already. It has wide-ranging specific powers on property development, business advisory services and the provision of finance for social and economic purposes. Its specific aims are to develop a flourishing enterprise culture within mid-Wales.

Mr. Win Griffiths: What consideration has the Department given to the activities of the board against the background of what is now admitted to be a recession in the coming year? What estimates has the Minister made of the rates of employment and unemployment in the area covered by the board?

Sir Wyn Roberts: I am coming to that.

The second aim of the board is to assist the private sector in building better businesses and creating the jobs necessary to sustain and diversify the base of local economies.

The third aim is to provide for the people of mid-Wales, with their unique social and cultural heritage, the opportunities to stay and prosper in mid-
fourth is to improve the quality of life in mi
improving the number and quality of social f
access to them.

The board's operational objectives relate m
creation of viable jobs and the retention of
young people by providing the kind of
economic opportunities that they require. Jo
inextricably linked with economic, social and d
structural improvement.

I was asked about the relationship of mid
the state of the economy. This and last nig
Reading debate are about the only debates
heard for some time in which the unemploy
were not mentioned once. There is a good rea
I am the first to mention the figures because
rate of unemployment for October 1990 in
travel-to-work areas was 4·1 per cent., compa
Welsh average of 6·7 per cent. That is a clea
success of the DBRW, which has been ackn
both sides of the House.

The debate has been wide-ranging be
represented an effort on the part of the O
extend the debate beyond the remit of the
board. The new financial limit proposed unde
provide the board with the headroom it nee
the tasks that I have specified, not only no
years ahead. There is no question but that i
success and that it will be a success in the fu

Question put and agreed to.

Clause ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 2 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Bill reported, without amendment.

Bill read the Third time, and passed.

Import and Export Control Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

6.40 pm

The Minister for Trade (Mr. Tim Sainsbury): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

The Bill is short and technical; my speech will be short but I hope not too technical.

The Bill repeals section 9(3) of the Import, Export and Customs Powers (Defence) Act 1939. That subsection provides that the Act will expire when an Order in Council is made declaring that the emergency that was the occasion of the Act's passing is at an end. By repealing the subsection, the effect of clause 1 is to make the 1939 Act permanent. I do not think, in the circumstances, that I need dwell on the purpose of clause 2.

The 1939 Act is the last major piece of the emergency legislation introduced at the beginning of the second world war which remains in use, although, perhaps not surprisingly, it is not the only one remaining on the statute book. While preparing this Bill, we have initiated a review of other emergency legislation with analogous provisions to section 9(3), notably the Compensation (Defence) Act 1939 and the Landlord and Tenant (Requisitioned Land) Act 1939 and the Landlord and Tenant (Requisitioned Land) Act 1942. Whilst the review is not yet complete, we have reached the preliminary conclusion that the powers provided by these Acts are no longer necessary.

The Import Export and Customs Powers (Defence) Act 1939 gives powers to the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to make orders prohibiting or regulating the import or export of goods to or from the United Kingdom, and enabling licences to import and export goods to be granted. It also provides for the forfeiture of goods imported or exported contrary to an order.

The power to control imports and exports has been, and remains, essential to implement a wide range of important Government policies. The powers to control exports have for many years been used to restrict trade for strategic reasons—for example, with the Warsaw pact countries and the People's Republic of China. The continuing need for such powers, even in a more peaceful world, is only too obvious. Other examples of the use of the powers are to implement international treaty obligations, such as the nuclear non-proliferation treaty, and to give effect to our other non-proliferation policies aimed at preventing countries from developing a chemical, biological, missile or nuclear capability; to prevent certain exports which could be prejudicial to national security, such as encryption equipment; and to prevent the export of goods likely to be used for terrorist purposes or for internal repression.

The powers of the Act are used to prevent exports of antiques and other items which are considered to be an important part of the national heritage. We also use the powers of the Act to implement the voluntary restraint agreement on steel exports.

The powers to control imports are equally important in relation to safeguarding public security, such as firearms, and to support foreign policy objectives, although they are used mainly to enforce internationally agreed trade protection measures, including restrictions on imports of textile and clothing products within the framework of the multi-fibre arrangement. The Act is also used to regulate the import of bananas, although, contrary to some popular opinions, that is not to help the Government to avoid banana skins but to help protect our traditional suppliers in the Commonwealth Caribbean.

The powers in the Act to control exports are implemented by the Export of Goods (Control) Order 1989, which specifies the goods the export of which requires a licence from the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. It is for exporters to determine in the first place whether a particular product needs an export licence. In the event that advice is required, my Department stands ready to assist. Licence applications are submitted to the export control organisation within the DTI. To minimise the burden of export controls on exporters, a number of open general and open individual export licences have been introduced covering many industrial dual-use goods. Those remove the need to seek prior authorisation from the DTI before making a shipment.

Imports are controlled under the Import of Goods (Control) Order 1954, also made under the 1939 Act, which prohibits the import of all goods. Since there is no reason to restrict the entry of most goods, an open general import licence has been introduced which permits goods to be imported without the need to apply for an individual licence, with the exception of those goods specified in a detailed schedule. Goods in that schedule can be imported only under the authority of an individual import licence, for which importers apply to my Department's import licensing branch.

The powers have been used regularly by every Government since the war. Nearly 200 orders or amendments to orders have been made since the end of the war, averaging more than four each year. That is a clear indication of the continuing need on the part of successive Governments for powers which enable new items to be brought under control when that is judged necessary in response to a perceived threat or technological change.

Equally, controls which have become unnecessary can be removed. For example, the major relaxation in controls, introduced in the light of developments in eastern Europe, which was announced in July by COCOM partners, has been implemented under the powers of the 1939 Act. I hope that the present negotiations on a "core list" will lead to further relaxations in export controls early next year.

The powers are therefore tried and tested. Experience has shown that they work efficiently and effectively without placing unnecessary burdens on business. The 1939 Act enables us to react quickly and flexibly in response to each situation as it arises. The importance of the power has been highlighted by the present Gulf crisis.

I emphasise that the Bill is essentially a technical measure. It does not affect the exercise of powers under the Act, or the import and export licensing systems which have been established and which are familiar to importers and exporters. However, I am sure that the House will agree that it is no longer satisfactory to control imports and exports under powers derived from an Act which

"shall continue in force until such date as His Majesty may by Order in Council declare to be the date that the emergency that was the occasion of the passing of this Act came to an end".

We should now make the Act permament.

The Bill does not in practice change anything. The powers conferred by the Act have been operating

[Mr. Tim Sainsbury]

satisfactorily for many years, and it is important that they continue to do so in the future. The Bill simply has the effect of putting them on a permanent legislative footing.

6.48 pm

Ms. Joyce Quin (Gateshead, East): I listened carefully to the Minister's explanation. The Opposition do not object to the Bill, as it makes sense in the light of events. In view of the reunification of Germany and the fact that the allied powers now have no role in Berlin, it is patently absurd to suggest that any part of the emergency circumstances of the second world war exist today. In any event, the Government have made clear statements to that effect, in answer to parliamentary questions and in documents, for example, in the Government's observations to the fourth report of the Foreign Affairs Committee, in which they referred to the treaty on the final settlement. It says that the treaty settles

"between the parties . . .definitively matters arising out of the Second World War."

If the 1939 Act were unamended, we should be in the strange position where it would presumably be possible for exporters and companies to challenge the legal validity of any measures taken under the 1939 Act.

When I first looked at the Act and the proposed Bill, my first impressions were of alarm and surprise. My alarm stemmed from the fact that the 1939 Act is couched in the language of war. That was not surprising because it was clearing the way for the conditions of war and the trading embargos and restrictions that were going to operate during that period. I was alarmed at the wording of the Act, which still pertains today, and I was surprised that the Act should be the legal base for so much of the export and import control adopted by Governments of different political complexions since 1939. Therefore, our willingness to accept the Bill does not mean that we accept that the 1939 Act should be the basis of such controls for ever and ever. It might well be sensible for a future Government to introduce a modern Bill, not couched in the language of 1939, to allow, for whatever reason, necessary restrictions on exports and imports.

I am glad that the Minister gave us some details of the way in which the 1939 Act continues to operate and some reasons for existing export and import restrictions. Will the Minister confirm that, while he referred to political reasons, there may be other reasons, such as health reasons, for the control of exports and imports allowed by the Act?

How effective is our import and export legislation? Let us look at the so-called Iraqi supergun incident. I do not apologise for raising that matter now, because the Opposition have repeatedly asked the Department of Trade and Industry to make a statement in the light of the dropping of charges in the Iraqi supergun affair. Following that affair, we are concerned about the effectiveness of our export and import controls.

When the previous Secretary of State for Trade and Industry was first asked about the so-called Iraqi supergun, he said that it was not possible to reveal the full details because of the possibility of criminal proceedings being instigated. Now that charges have been dropped, we feel that we have a right to certain answers and are still perturbed that there seems to have been a failing within the Department of Trade and Industry to appreciate the warnings given to it by the hon. Member (Sir H. Miller) and others about the equipment to Iraq. Why was nothing do information, which has been available sin the specifications and contracts surroundi detailed information on changes made to knowledge that existed about the involve Research Corporation of Dr. Gerald Bu

Will the Department state what has equipment already sent to Iraq? Are the of the equipment is involved in test firing is the military assessment of its potentia

An alarming report in *The Independe*

"Somewhere in Iraq, the 90ft long British-built guns may be trained on kilometres away in Saudi Arabia."

That is a matter of grave concern to al

Why did the Government fail to embargo against Iraq? We want full in other possible breaches of the embargo. to know where they stand on exp restrictions. One company involved wa in a telephone conversation with the Dep and Industry, that it did not need a lice Prime Minister, the right hon. Member f Thatcher), subsequently said at Questi company should have applied for an ex effectively changed the nature of the a and put a different onus on the comp companies are to be held responsible for use of equipment or products, they need assistance and effective response from t Trade and Industry than was evident i hon. Friend the Member for Sheffie Caborn) said.

Considerable concern was expressed the House when statements were mad March and April this year on the Iraq Many of the questions asked then are Surely it is time for the Government to clean on that issue. It is simply not goo Department to say that any stateme judgment made to drop charges sho Customs and Excise—a full statement Commons by the Department of Trad necessary.

The Opposition do not object to the Minister said, is a technical measure amendment to the 1939 Act if that Act reality. But we urge the Government export-import procedures. In the l Government have a long-term future, w other legal vehicles be brought forwa control of exports and imports appropriate than the obviously dated

6.57 pm

Mr. Sainsbury: With the leave of reply. The hon. Member for Gateshea has expressed her support for the Bil grateful. I note what she said about t used the expression "for ever and ever." not suggest that the 1939 Act should legislation for ever and ever, but it is consideration whether it would be app it. In practice, very few people have occ

original Act and would look at the orders, with which the hon. Lady is familiar and which are set out in more modern language, not in terms of dealing with the enemy.

With regard to the Iraqi supergun, as I hoped I made clear in my introductory remarks, it is for those seeking to export items to satisfy themselves whether a licence is required. The mechanism for controlling the export of military equipment and components from this country is the licensing regime administered by my Department, under the Export of Goods (Control) Order 1989, made under the 1939 Act. It is for exporters to take reasonable steps to find out what they are making and disclose all relevant facts when asking about the need for a licence. A licence would have been needed to export components for a long-range gun to any destination, and would not have been granted for export to Iraq. In 1988 exchanges took place between Government Departments and industry in which advice was sought about the need for licences in relation to certain tubes. No basis was found for advising the companies that the tubes were subject to licence, and industry was accordingly informed that no export licences were required.

In the light of the Iraqi supergun case, the relevant Departments have reviewed their procedures. The hon. Lady asked about the effectiveness of those procedures. Some improvements have already been made and others will soon be made. The aim of the improvements is to remove any scope that may exist for misunderstanding between inquirers and Departments and ensure that all information available to the Government, which might be relevant to particular export proposals, is taken into account when deciding whether a licence is necessary and, if so, whether it should be granted. I hope that the hon. Lady will be reassured by what I have said.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time.

Bill committed to a Committee of the whole House. *—[Mr. Nicholas Baker.]*

Bill immediately considered in Committee; reported, without amendment; read the Third time, and passed.

Weapons

7 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Peter Lloyd): I beg to move,

That this House takes note of European Community Documents Nos. 10074/89 and 8836/90, relating to controls on the acquisition and possession of weapons; and endorses the Government's view that any Directive must preserve the right of Member States to make those checks that are necessary for public security and public safety and that any additional burden on business should be kept to a minimum.

I welcome the opportunity to debate this important draft directive on the Floor of the House. The Commission has proposed the directive as part of the plan to complete the single market. This proposal, advanced in November 1989, was revised in October this year to incorporate those amendments suggested by the European Parliament which the Commission had decided to accept. It is the October 1990 text, document No. 8836/90, on which recent negotiations in the Council have focused.

Firearms issues are nearly always controversial, but there is wide agreement on the two fundamental principles on which our domestic firearms legislation is based. First, and of paramount importance, is the need to ensure public safety. Second there is the need to safeguard the legitimate interests of those who use firearms in pursuit of their work or sport, subject always to the primary consideration of public safety. These two principles have guided our approach to this draft directive.

One of the directive's objectives is to increase security throughout the Community by the partial harmonisation of member states' firearms law. The directive sets a minimum standard of firearms control, to which all member states must adhere. This is intended to improve the safety of the Community's citizens. The admittedly modest degree of levelling up involved in this directive is something to which the Government can give wholehearted support.

Under the directive, in article 3, member states are left free to adopt more stringent controls in their domestic legislation. So there is no levelling down in domestic law, and it is important to keep that in mind when looking at the proposal. It guarantees that those standards of control which we consider necessary to protect public safety are unaffected.

The House may agree with me when I say that this has proved a complex and difficult text to understand, but the main aim of the directive is simple: it is to put in place sufficient compensatory measures to enable member states to abstain from controls on the possession of weapons at internal borders after 1992.

Underpinning these compensatory measures is the principle stated explicitly in the directive that the movement of firearms across Community borders is forbidden unless the rules of the directive are met. Perhaps the most important of these rules is that weapons prohibited under domestic legislation by a member state may not be brought into the territory of that member state. So, for example, the prohibition of some categories of weapons introduced by the Firearms (Amendment) Act 1988 is unaffected by the directive.

The primary compensatory measure proposed in the directive is the notification and information exchange system—in articles 11 and 13—which requires that member states are notified of every permanent transfer of

[Mr. Peter Lloyd]

firearms to their territory. Under article 11.4, member states can insist that the transfer may not take place without their prior consent. The result for firearms dealers in this country would be a system similar to that currently operated whereby dealers, duly authorised under the Firearms Acts passed between 1968 and 1988, may receive an open general import licence which places no restriction on the quality of firearms imported.

For travel with personal firearms within the Community, the directive introduces a European firearms pass—article 1.4. But in general the pass will not itself convey authorisation to travel with firearms. The pass holder will still have to obtain prior authorisation from the member state to be visited—article 12.1.

However, there is an important exception to the status of the European firearms pass in relation to sportsmen and marksmen. Under article 12.2, sportsmen and women would be able to take their personal firearms freely to other member states on the basis of a European firearms pass without prior authorisation from the member state to be visited. This provision causes us particular concern, as it conflicts with our domestic controls on visitors.

The British visitor's permit scheme, set up under the Firearms (Amendment) Act 1988, allows overseas visitors to come and shoot here with the minimum of fuss and bother. But—and this is the fundamental point—the scheme requires visitors to obtain our prior authorisation for their visit.

Our concerns on this issue have been made clear both in official working group discussions and in the Council of Ministers. It has been gratifying that there has been a sympathetic response from our European partners, who have recognised the difficulty that this provision presents for the United Kingdom. The likelihood is that we shall be able to secure either an amendment to article 12.2 on the lines proposed by the European Parliament or a waiver from its provisions. In either case this would allow us to continue to operate the British visitor's permit scheme.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): What is meant by the abolition of controls on weapons at international frontiers? We are grateful for what the Minister said about traders having to register and about new passes and licences, but if these controls are abolished, will that mean that people are not searched? Which controls will be abolished?

Mr. Lloyd: The directive means that at an internal frontier there will be no regular system of inspection for weapons. We retain the right to make searches and checks as we believe them necessary for our national security. I refer my hon. Friend to article 36 of the treaty, with which he will be familiar, as the basis on which we may retain that right. If the directive is adopted there will be no regular inspection of everyone coming in from the Community, but we retain the right to make such checks as we think necessary to maintain our security.

Mr. James Hill (Southampton, Test): Will my hon. Friend confirm that a customs officer will still present to a passenger arriving in this country a list which will state clearly that firearms are not allowed and must be declared?

Mr. Lloyd: A Community traveller crossing an internal boundary will require prior permission and certification, but it will be perfectly legitimate for him t across the border. It will not be legitimate without the permit and authorisation. comes into force, we shall no longer insp regard firearms as goods that may no Anyone crossing the border with a gu already in the country—is legally requi appropriate permit; and, if any agent believes that a weapon is being carrie appropriate permission has not been gran the individual's possession, he will appropriate action, as he would have do

Mr. Jerry Wiggin (Weston-super-Ma we are making rather heavy weather o remains that anyone wishing to import a permanently or temporarily, requires spe tion under the 1988 Act. There is no directive's overriding that Act. That shou expressed by my hon. Friend the Memb East (Mr. Taylor)—and I think that I an that any of our own legislation that is mo the directive will apply.

Mr. Lloyd: Yes: our provisions relat legitimately be possessed in this country and it will not be legal to bring in a firea Community country without documente

Mr. Hill: This strikes me as exactly the It has not been improved at all.

Mr. Wiggin: What about the 1988 Ac

Mr. Hill: Will my hon. Friend kindly am trying to put my argument toge Southampton—part of which I repre important port, employing many custom a tremendous amount of work. I am tr that their vigilance will not be dim availability of a certificate. What about have no certificate, and do not declare wh I hope that the customs officers will not European directive which may make every[illegible]ng is under control.

Mr. Lloyd: I do not think that our cus want to shelter behind anything. The law provide that no obligation will be pla coming into this country to declare a firea has the correct permit. Of course, custo and all agents of Government will have a appropriate action if they suspect that a brought in without the correct authorisa

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Wa take it that a visiting sportsman with a port of Southampton, which is near my c a firearms certificate from the Comm which he was a national—if that was nation—and a European pass enablin round Europe with his gun would still visitor's permit? Will he really need documents?

Mr. Lloyd: He may have all three doc we insist on is the British visitor's perm the case.

Mr. Hill: What about the visiting te

Mr. Lloyd: The trouble with visiting terrorists who bring in weapons is that they do not declare them to customs officers, even at present.

As currently formulated, the directive suggests that member states must abstain from all checks on the possession of weapons at intra-Community frontiers: that is in article 15, and is what we have been discussing. We accept that other measures in the directive, which I have outlined—the ability to maintain prohibitions, the requirement for notification or prior authority and the information exchange system—provide sufficient safeguards to enable us to refrain from systematic checks on the possession of weapons at internal borders. We believe, however—as I told my hon. Friends a few moments ago—that we must retain the right to make checks that we consider necessary to safeguard public safety and security. We hold strongly to the validity of the general declaration annexed to the Single European Act, which states:

"Nothing in the provisions of the Act shall affect the right of Member States to take such measures as they consider necessary for the purpose of combating terrorism, crime and the traffic in drugs."

We shall continue to press for recognition that the rights affirmed by that general declaration, and by article 36 of the treaty of Rome—to which I referred earlier—remain unaffected by this directive. The United Kingdom is not alone in this approach, but has the support of some other member states.

We are, of course, concerned that any new requirements on business should be kept to the minimum consistent with providing for public safety. Careful consideration has been given to the implications of the directive for firearms dealers. We have had useful discussions with representatives of the trade; they asked for some minor but important alterations to the timing of the notifications on transfers of firearms which they would be required to provide under articles 11 and 13. Following concerns expressed by ourselves and other member states, the necessary changes have now been agreed. Given those modifications, the trade's view is that the directive will impose no new burden on their business.

I now propose to say a few words about some of the important definitions and technical details of the proposals, and how they affect our own domestic controls. I know that the definitional problems, which always arise in connection with firearms legislation, caused widespread concern in the shooting community when the directive was first published. Further concern was caused by some of the amendments proposed by the European Parliament. We have been glad to take full account of the views expressed by the representatives of the British Shooting Sports Council, which is co-ordinating the response of the sporting interests in the shooting community. Their concern, and ours, has been to obtain some major improvements to the original text. I am glad to say that, thanks to the vigorous and expert input from the United Kingdom and other member states, a number of improvements to the classifications and definitions of firearms have been achieved.

For example, in the category of prohibited firearms, the imprecise term

"firearms usually used as military weapons"

is to be replaced by "automatic firearms". Hollow and soft-point ammunition, which is widely used for hunting and target shooting, is not to be prohibited as originally proposed but will be available to those with the appropriate authorisation. That is in line with our current domestic controls on such ammunition.

Following the firm expression of views by us and by other member states, it is now expected that the proposed minimum age limit of 18 for the possession of certain firearms will not apply to sportsmen and target shooters: that will allow youngsters to continue to participate in shooting sports, and will leave our domestic controls unchanged.

Mr. Peter Griffiths (Portsmouth, North): Will my hon. Friend add to that a clear statement that no further restrictions will be placed on disabled persons who wish to take part in shooting activities?

Mr. Lloyd: I was coming to that. My hon. Friend is right to raise the point, and we too have been concerned about it.

Similarly, the mental and physical capacity requirements proposed for possession of firearms, which may have been seen as discriminatory—indeed, I think that many of us thought them so—are expected to be dropped as they relate to many people who play an active part in shooting.

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): It is terribly worrying for hon. Members who have prepared for the debate by reading all the necessary papers to find that all the measures that we have come here to complain about have been overturned. What, in fact, are we discussing?

Mr. Lloyd: I hoped that my hon. Friend might be pleased that we had made some progress since the last formal document was issued. Some of my hon. Friends may wish to make additional points; if my hon. Friend was indeed hoping for the change that I have announced, I can only say that I am sorry that he has been deprived of the opportunity to make a convincing speech, or, at least, found it unnecessary. I nevertheless hope that he will be gratified that the endeavours that he intended to make have already borne fruit.

Mr. Stuart Randall (Kingston upon Hull, West): I am annoyed that we have before us a document dated 3 October 1990. It is called a consultative document. I assume that it is the current document. It says explicitly:

"Without prejudice to Article 3, Member States shall allow the acquisition and possession of firearms classified in category B"—

which is what we are talking about—

"only by persons who have good cause and who . . . are 18 years old or more".

It is infuriating that we are debating out-of-date documents. That is not the way to run Parliament. I want an explanation from the Minister.

Mr. Lloyd: Discussions are held continuously. When I know that progress has been made, I report to the House at the first opportunity. I am sorry that the document represents the position as it was some time ago. I understand the hon. Gentleman's irritation if he wished to make a speech about changes that he wanted to be made but that have already been made.

Mr. Randall: The Minister's explanation is not good enough. There is no excuse why the House should be debating a document in respect of which a change has been made, about which the Minister has notice but not the House. That is unacceptable. We ought to have had an

[Mr. Randall]

explanation. It could have been given by letter. There are all sorts of ways in which it could have been explained. It is unacceptable that we should have out-of-date documents on policy matters that are important to both sides of the House.

Mr. Lloyd: I understand the hon. Gentleman's ire. We are debating the latest text that has been provided by the Commission. There has been agreement on certain matters, about which I hope the hon. Gentleman will be satisfied. They have not been written up but I am taking the first opportunity that I have to let him know about them. Our obligation is to discuss texts provided by the Commission. The fact that I am able to add to that should be helpful to hon. Members. It is better for me to do that rather than to conceal that there has been further agreement.

Mr. Randall: I accept that the Commission publishes documents at various times. However, the Home Office also publishes documents on European matters. It provides explanatory memoranda. There is no control whatsoever over the Home Office when it comes to publishing explanatory memoranda. Something could have been produced in time for the debate. Although changes have taken place, there is a mechanism that would have allowed that to happen. It has not happened. The Minister and the Home Office have let down the House. I do not see how we can continue the debate, since we are not sure what other changes have been made. It makes the quality of the debate dubious, to say the least.

Mr. Lloyd: I hear what the hon. Gentleman says and I understand his exasperation. We are debating a text published by the Commission with which we were not satisfied. I regret, in a way, that we were successful in further negotiations sufficiently early for me to be able to tell the hon. Gentleman verbally here, without having been able to provide that information in writing and without the Commission having been able to provide a new text.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): I dare say that there have been developments since the Home Office document of 25 October which was published by the Minister. Naturally, we are interested in those developments. However, we are debating documents that have been published. The status of the assurances from the Minister is by no means clear. He says that agreements have been reached. Agreements with whom—with all the member states, or with the Commission? What reliance can hon. Members place upon such assurances if we do not know the nature of the agreements that are alleged to have been made? The Minister seems to be trying to pre-empt the discussion by bouncing the House in a wholly unacceptable way.

Mr. Lloyd: The House cannot be bounced at this point. It is making no decision other than to adopt the Government's general stance in the negotiations. The fact that I was able to say that it looks as though on some points we have been more successful in the negotiations than we were when the document was published in no way bounces the House. In fact, it ought to bring some cheer to hon. Members.

Mr. Wiggin: I very much welcome the Minister's announcement. In many respects it deals with our worries. However, having gone to great trouble to change an important international engagement in order to be here tonight, I have to complain to the Minister that the debate need not have been held in its present form. The major points have been dealt with, but there may still be need for further debate. To conduct the debate on the basis of the document that is before us is no longer sensible. I thank my hon. Friend for the negotiations that he has carried out and I congratulate him on his success, but may I suggest that we ought to adjourn the debate and return to it later, if there are outstanding points still to be considered?

Mr. Lloyd: I hear what my hon. Friend says, but the motion before the House is to approve the Government's negotiating stance.

The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) asked about the status of the improvements. Agreements are reached in the Council's official working group. They have the general approval of the representatives of the other member states.

I understand the irritation of hon. Members, because we have been more successful, and more quickly successful, than some of us might have hoped. I shall reflect upon the machinery that is available to make sure that the very latest position is communicated to hon. Members before a debate is held. When, however, negotiations are taking place not just at regular and predictable intervals but all the time, there is a problem. I shall reflect upon how the House ought to be informed of these matters, but it is not primarily a Home Office matter. It is for the appropriate Committees of the House to consider the machinery whereby European directives and documents can be debated by hon. Members.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): We are not just being asked to endorse the Government's stance; the motion also asks the House to take note of documents that patently are out of date. I understood the Minister to say that the provisions relating to disabled people are expected to be dropped. "Expected to be dropped" is somewhat different from saying that already there is an agreement. That highlights our problem. We are not sure what parts have been agreed, what parts might be agreed and what likelihood there is that they will be agreed. Will the Minister explain what he means by "expected to be dropped" and whether that differs from an agreement?

Mr. Lloyd: That was the tenor of the agreements in the working group. We believe that the wording will be changed in a wholly satisfactory way. The motion before the House is to approve the Government's negotiating stance; it is not that the House should approve any particular wording. What is useful about the debate, which has not been welcomed as much as I hoped that it would be, is that I have been able to inform the House about agreements that have been reached in the working group. Moreover, it enables me to take on board—because the discussions are continuing—any other points that hon. Members wish to impress upon the Government, since we believe that they ought to form part of our negotiating stance.

Mr. Randall: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I should like your advice. If we divide the House, will we be voting on the EC document before us or on the

Government's negotiating stance which has been presented orally by the Minister? It is crucial to know that because the motion before the House is a take-note motion and it refers to a document. If we vote on the motion, we have to accept that the words of the EC document are extant on the technicalities. The Minister has just said that if we were to vote we would be voting on the Government's stance in the negotiations that have taken place since the publication of the documents as well as the Home Office internal memorandum.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): I can help the House. We are debating the motion on the Order Paper. There are two key points in the motion. It says that we should, first, take note of certain European documents and, secondly, endorse the Government's view as expressed in the motion. Therefore, were there to be a Division, we would be voting on the motion with those two aspects in mind.

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield) *rose*——

Mr. Lloyd: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Haynes: I should think that the Minister would give way. That is what we are here for. We are here to discuss the document. I am sick of being kicked around by the Government, and that is what is happening. The Minister is ducking about all over the place. He does not know where he is and nor do we. I had a document dated 2 October. That is what is on the Table.

I do not accept what the Minister has said. He is bringing a verbal report to the House which is not satisfactory. My hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, West (Mr. Randall) is right in saying that we should have had a report from the Home Office so that we can consider the matter properly. I have had a going over about these proposals by my constituents in Ashfield. I am here representing the people who have given me a going over and I am not satisfied with the Minister's explanation.

I agree with the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare (Mr. Wiggin) that we should adjourn the debate until we have all the information necessary to discuss the matter properly. As I have said, I am sick to death of being kicked around by the Government. They think that they can do what they like because of their large majority, but I am afraid that they cannot. We are all here because we are not satisfied with the way things are going.

Mr. Lloyd: The hon. Gentleman is protesting far too much. Nobody would dream of kicking him around. I always find it illuminating to give way to the hon. Gentleman, but that was one of his less illuminating interventions. If he has points to make on behalf of his constituents, he is welcome to make them if he catches your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Haynes: Do your job properly.

Mr. Lloyd: We have done our job so well that I am able to tell the House that we have achieved in negotiations some of the things that the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) and other hon. Members would be pressing us to achieve in the next few weeks. The hon. Member for Ashfield is sad because the Government have already done some of the things that he was going to ask us to do.

In case the hon. Member for Ashfield did not notice, the document before the House is the latest text provided by the Commission, and it is our duty to bring it before the House. When I came to the debate I was pleased to bring some good news. Perhaps on future occasions I should suppress such news. However, that would be unfair and unreasonable and I would do no such thing.

I want to touch on two other matters. The first I mention for clarification and the second for its legal significance. The House will have noted that, although the scope of this directive extends not only to firearms but also to weapons such as knives and crossbows, the compensatory measures proposed relate only to firearms. In effect, the domestic law on such weapons is left unchanged by this directive.

Lastly, I draw the House's attention to the question of the legal base of article 100A proposed by the Commission for the directive. We doubt whether that is appropriate, since it seems to us that one of the main aims of the directive is to facilitate the freedom of movement of persons carrying firearms as personal baggage. In our view, article 100 or article 235 may be more appropriate for the legal base. We have put our views to the Council Legal Services which is still considering the matter. Its formal opinion is expected to be delivered shortly. We will need to look carefully at what it says before we can reach a final conclusion on the matter. We shall continue to work constructively within the Council to reach a directive which maintains public safety and which is workable and legally acceptable.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: Is it the case that, unless the Council agrees unanimously to the Government's point that it should not be article 100A, nothing can happen? If the Council does not agree with the Government's point of view, what can they do about it?

Mr. Lloyd: We could determine whether we believed that the base chosen would not stand up in law and whether the European Court would direct that it was wrong. Before we did that, we would have to consider carefully all the arguments and whether we were likely to win them. I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) is very knowledgeable about these matters. We have said that we believe that the Commission has proposed the wrong case. We are seeking to persuade the Commission and our colleagues in the EC that it should be article 100 or article 235. The Commission is due to provide us with a formal response to our arguments, but we have not had that yet. When we receive it, we can consider more sensibly and effectively what course is open to us, unless, of course, the Commission agrees with us.

Mr. Taylor: I want to clarify this point because none of us knows the answer. If, despite the Minister's splendid points, the Commission says, "We are sorry but we think that it should be article 100A", does its view stand unless there is unanimous disagreement? My understanding is that that is so. There must be a unanimous rejection of the Commission's view and if, for example, Portugal or Greece thinks that it should be article 100A, that is it.

Mr. Lloyd: Luckily, I can tell my hon. Friend that the answer is yes. Unanimity is required to change the legal base.

Mr. Wiggin: The Home Office memorandum says clearly that the Council shall act by a qualified majority. Therefore, there is a difference of opinion.

Mr. Lloyd: On the legal base proposed by the Commission, the operation will be by qualified majority. Under the articles we are suggesting—article 100 or article 235—it will be by unanimous agreement. I was answering my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East about how the base is determined. His fear was correct. As I said earlier, it is theoretically possible for us to challenge that on legal grounds and that would be a matter for the European Court. I would not like to hold out too much hope that that would be an avenue that we would think it wise to go down. If we did, I do not know whether it would be successful. However, it is a possibility.

I have taken more time than I intended in bringing good news to the House, so I will now commend the motion. I will listen carefully to any changes, strengthening or alterations that right hon. and hon. Members propose, because discussions on the directive continue.

7.39 pm

Mr. Stuart Randall (Kingston upon Hull, West): The House has discussed the status of the document before us, and I want to add one further comment about that before beginning the main part of my speech. As the officials in Brussels have already reached agreement on allowing young people aged 14 and above to use firearms, why was there not sufficient time to produce an additional explanatory memorandum to explain that?

Mr. Colvin: Is the age limit really being lowered to only 14? I thought that it was to be lowered to 17 years of age. Perhaps I misheard my hon. Friend the Minister.

Mr. Randall: I shall deal with that point in detail later. However, there is concern that children of 14 who, under current British Law, and under proper supervision, can fire pistols or rifles will not be able to do so under the directive.

The purpose of the measure is to harmonise the acquisition and possession of weapons within the European Community as part of the progress towards a single unified market. However, it will provide only partial harmonisation, because each member state can operate independent firearms legislation, provided that it meets certain minimum standards. In practice, the directive will mean that arms traders, sportsmen and others, will be able to move freely within member states with their own firearms provided that certain limited conditions are met.

I support the development of the so-called single European market, because I believe that Britain's future is firmly linked to the EEC's development. I want to see the Community thrive, for the sake of not only the people of Britain but the people of the other member states.

Despite the need for degrees of harmonisation, we must remember that the commodity covered by this directive is not wine, cheese, or computer technology but firearms, which deserve special consideration, given that public safety is at stake.

The Commission must not full steam ahead in such a way that it could prejudice public safety. If that happened, such innovations by the Commission and the Council of Ministers would be strongly resented by the British public. There is a balance to be struck between harmonisation as part of developing the single market and protecting public safety. Where there is any doubt, public safety must always receive top priority.

The thrust of the directive seems reasonable in attempting to make it easier for responsible sportsmen and those who trade in shotguns and other weapons to travel with their firearms within the EEC. However, to achieve that objective, the Commission is proposing the abolition of internal border checks. At the same time, it is proposing weak compensatory measures. The net effect will be an unacceptable threat to public safety.

There is at issue a broader question than trade, and it is one for which the EEC is not responsible. I refer to national security. The removal of border checks between the United Kingdom and other member states could be regarded as a charter for terrorism. With the help of a few forged documents, members of all kinds of terrorist organisations would be able to move freely within the EEC with various weapons, to plant bombs, and to cause havoc. It is vital that internal border checks remain, especially for Britain, because of the problems that we have with the IRA. Accordingly, the availability of good intelligence and a policy of targeted checks at internal as well as external borders are crucial ingredients in combating terrorism.

Mr. Wiggin: The legitimate owner of firearms has always made the argument that, while legislation documents rules and controls are made to apply to honest straightforward people, the terrorist will never obey any law—however comprehensive it may be.

Mr. Randall: That point is central in my thoughts. The Commission is directing its attention to the legitimate users of firearms to whom the hon. Gentleman referred but in removing internal border controls, it will also allow terrorist threats to emerge. I am not privy to internal Government security policy, and rightly so, but, as that aspect is part of the directive, it must be raised. I shall refer later to sportsmen, targeters, and others. My point is that Britain's national security is not within the competence of the EEC, and once border checks are done away with threats would emerge.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: I agree absolutely with the hon. Gentleman that the directive will create additional security problems and greater dangers for the British public. What does Labour think we should do about that? This measure will probably be passed by a majority vote next week and whether we like it or not, will become the law of the land. I should love to know what the Opposition think we should do about that. It is a genuine question.

Mr. Randall: The hon. Gentleman is pre-empting my speech, but he asked a reasonable question. The measure is totally flawed and concerns a matter that is outside the competence of the Commission. Certain national considerations are beyond the scope of the document, and I am inclined to vote against it.

Any measure that will help sportsmen and other genuine members of the public to move around Europe with their firearms more easily is entirely laudable and acceptable, provided that it does not imperil public safety. We can let the Commission know in the strongest possible terms that we oppose the basic structure of this document by voting against it—that is all the power we have as parliamentarians. That is why we will suggest that there should be a Division.

These are security matters. It is necessary to have intelligence and targeted checks at borders. There will be immense problems in Britain because of the number of people who will go through the channel tunnel, but we must also be vigilant in dealing with terrorism.

In proposing the abolition of internal border checks, the directive advocates the introduction of several compensatory measures. The first is to toughen external border checks. On its own, that seems a reasonable proposal. However, as Britain is on the periphery of the EEC and forms part of the external border, and as we have special problems with the IRA compared with other member states, it is exceedingly unlikely that the proposal in the directive to strengthen external border checks will result in much change—certainly not along the external border of Britain—because our authorities will almost certainly have taken the necessary steps to combat terrorism in that way. The directive's proposal will not add anything in particular. Anything that helps to restrict terrorists' ability to import weapons to the EEC via other external borders is clearly welcome.

A second compensatory measure is the proposal that firearms legislation throughout the Community should meet certain minimum standards. Ours goes well beyond what I would envisage to be the minimum standard. If certain member states wish for their own reasons to have firearms legislation that goes beyond those minimum standards, it is a matter for those member states to decide. In practice, this means that there will be disparities between various member states, in terms of not only legislation but the border controls that the firearms legislation determines. The Firearms (Amendment) Act 1988 resulted in the British visitor's permit, which allowed personal firearms to be checked at borders for compliance with the scheme. It should be noted that removal of the controls would result in the British visitor's permit scheme becoming inoperable. It seems, from what the Minister said in response to an intervention by the hon. Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor), that the opportunity for spot checks will disappear. Those powers which exist at the moment to carry out such spot checks will cease to exist because of the directive.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I said that the Customs controls that exist at present will cease under this directive, but a central part of our stance in the negotiations is opposition to controls for internal borders—certainly ours. We want targeted checks based on intelligence, and I think that the hon. Gentleman agrees. They will remain essential. They are the means by which firearms brought in illegally are found now. We intend to maintain the use of intelligence and checks as our security dictates, although the directive would mean that blanket checks at a normal, old-fashioned international border may not be maintained between Community countries.

Mr. Randall: These are matters of security and I am not an expert on them. I should have thought that, the greater the belt-and-braces approach in security matters, the better. We have seen many examples of the way in which IRA arms stores have been found purely by chance and by spot checks. I should regret any weakening of those powers.

A third compensatory measure proposed in the directive for the removal of internal border checks is the establishment of an information system, the purpose of which is to provide data for member states describing which firearms have crossed their internal borders and entered their countries. I should be grateful if the Minister would tell the House—I am confused about this—whether the Commission proposes that a centralised records system should be set up for the whole of the EEC. Will he tell the House exactly what the functions of the system will be? How will this system compensate for the loss of border controls? Who will control it? As we have centralised police forces, does it mean that every police authority in Britain will have to interact with this system?

If I understand the system properly, it is a bureaucratic nightmare. Instead of that nonsense, I would rather our police were on the streets dealing with crime. That is what this country needs. I should be grateful if the Minister would give detailed answers to those points, because I am sure that the House wants to know the details.

It is important to recognise that the problems of terrorism, particularly the IRA, extend to other member states, rather than being associated only with the United Kingdom. That can best be illustrated by an article in *The Times* dated 18 June 1990 and entitled "European police forces co-operate in fight against terrorism". It is about the co-operation between the Dutch and Belgian authorities in arresting a suspected IRA terrorist on 16 June 1990—the Donna Maguire affair. I shall quote a little of it because it is enlightening. The article states:

"Interior ministers across the European Community are fully aware that the latest IRA bombing and shooting campaign against British bases and army personnel in West Germany and the Netherlands represents the most serious terrorist threat on the Continent since the wave of anarchist class warfare in the 1970s . . .

The IRA challenge is in some ways greater. As customs and immigration checks in the European Community (EC) becomes more relaxed due to increased economic integration, Irish republican terrorists find it easier to move across borders.

Last April . . . the head of West German's Federal Police, warned that a single Europe would make his country an even more tempting target for the IRA and other terrorist groups. IRA units have exploited this openness, striking at British bases and personnel and escaping in minutes across a border . . .

In response, European police forces have increased their co-operation . . . European Community interior ministers . . . agreed to streamline the exchange of information on terrorist groups, including the establishment of a European Common Information System. This will involve setting up a data base."

It seems odd that, with so much going on, the Commission is attempting, through the draft directive, to relax border controls on people and firearms. It does not make much sense.

The directive is based on the Schengen agreement, which has resulted in the lifting of certain border restrictions between the Benelux countries and Germany. What may be desirable or necessary for some EC member states on border controls may not apply to us.

It is surprising that the Commission has produced a draft directive that does not seem to take into account the disparity in firearms legislation and border controls between member states. The genuine concern of member states about their national security should have been taken into account in earlier drafts of the directive. National security is not a negotiable matter, so I hope that the draft, which is badly flawed, will be amended to take vital matters into account before it finally goes to the Council of Ministers.

We debated the matter of age earlier. Perhaps the Minister will tell us what the present feeling is in Brussels. I presume that the officials are negotiating those matters. Is there movement or is there likely to be movement on relaxing internal borders?

Why is the Commission suggesting that the directive be approved by majority voting rather than by unanimity?

[Mr. Randall]

What derogation can the United Kingdom obtain on the ground of national security if majority voting is applied? Although those matters are complex and legal, I should be grateful if the Minister would give a detailed answer.

Paragraph 8 of the explanatory memorandum dated 25 October says:

"The Directive also introduces a European Firearms Pass . . . for EC nationals wishing to travel with firarms within the Community. In general the EFP does not in itself convey authorisation to enter another Member state with a firearm, but is intended to facilitate it".

The memorandum then lists the exceptions. What is the real purpose of the pass? Who will be the issuing authority? The Minister answered the question about the British visitor's permit. It seems that we shall run the two in parallel. Will the Minister confirm that? Will Britain take part?

We had a discussion about article 5 and there is still concern about it because it has not been finalised. The directive restricts the acquisition and possession of weapons to those who are 18 years of age or more. As we know, at present in the United Kingdom, 14-year-olds can shoot with pistols and rifles if they are supervised in doing that. I regretted very much that that restriction was in the directive. It showed a lack of contact by the European Commission in understanding what goes on in this country. I am sure that the Minister realises that, if the restriction were put into practice, the effect of so limiting young people would be disastrous for Britain's future Olympic hopes in shooting events. Young people would not be able to train in their sport and that would be a serious problem. Unless there were a serious threat to public safety, the Labour party would have strongly opposed that part of the directive tonight. However, I am delighted to hear from the Minister orally that there has been a change in that provision.

The Labour party also opposes parts of article 5 because they could impose restrictions on paraplegics. Unless there are good public safety reasons for those restrictions, we should reject them. It is important that people with physical disabilities are not unnecessarily discriminated against and that they are free to pursue sport in the way that they wish.

It is important to note that the safety record of sportsmen in Britain is one of the best in Europe and, indeed, the world. The Labour party, therefore, believes that firearms sportsmen should be free to pursue their interests without having petty and unnecessary regulations imposed on them, whether by the Commission, by the British Government or by the other institutions that are involved in firearms. However, that freedom must be based on the unstinting concern by sportsmen for public safety. If they have such a concern, they will always receive the full support of the British Labour party.

We are appalled by the quality of the document. It is flawed and it is not up to date. We will demonstrate our opposition to the way in which this business has been handled, and our support for young sportspeople and sportspeople in general by dividing the House on the directive.

8.5 pm

Mr. Jerry Wiggin (Weston-super-Mare): I only that the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West Randall) had been speaking for the Opposition from Front Bench during the passage of the Firea (Amendment) Act 1988. I believe that there can harmony in this matter. In the course of his introduc remarks, my hon. Friend the Minister said several t that firearms matters were troublesome. The last thin the world that those of us who are fond of shooting is to have troublesome relations with the Governm There is no need to have troublesome relations with Government if—I repeat the principle that I enunci earlier in an intervention—it is recognised that law-abiding sportsman is not the person on whom force of law should descend. He does not commit crimes; he does not have the illegal weapons. At the of the 1988 Act, we were carried away, quite illogically the Hungerford incident and I do not want to refight t battles.

I must tell the House that I have an interest in matter as I have recently been elected chairman of British Shooting Sports Council—a post which is, s unpaid. I was grateful to my hon. Friend the Ministe acknowledging in his opening remarks that the council given some professional expert advice on this hi technical matter to the Home Office. I can assure my Friend that so long as I am chairman, the best pos relations will be established between that body and Home Office in the hope that we can come to sen solutions. I am sorry that we should always be consid to be a troublesome section of the community. Hund of thousands, if not millions, of people get a great de innocent fun from shooting in all its forms. It is not that there should be a conflict of interests between hobby and our Government.

I was immediately concerned to find that the "firearms" had been dropped from the heading of directive and that the word "weapons" had been used. word is used because weapons other than firearms covered by the directive. One mission that the Govern might care to pursue in Brussels is to differentiate bet firearms and all the other offensive weapons in wh have no interest and which I appreciate the nee control.

We must examine the purpose of the directive. I as being to establish an internal market in which the movement of goods and services is secured, to provid harmonisation as far as possible in national law member states and to ensure that member states conse or are aware of the import of weapons into their territ Many people in continental countries can go sho across a national border 50 miles down the road and countries' attitudes are, of course, quite different those pertaining in our island state. I suspect that the servant who drafted the directive is a contin gentleman living close to one of the national borders Brussels.

In the view of the shooting organisations, the dire should be primarily concerned with the question of frontiers rather than with attempts to impose fu restrictions on legitimate pursuits merely because involve the possession of firearms.

The progress of the directive has been long convoluted, and it has been complicated by diff

understandings of some of its technical details which have arisen from the different use of language as well as from the different languages used in the official papers. Such is the confusion surrounding the directive—this has been confirmed tonight—that even allegedly the most up-to-date edition is likely to have been superseded already. I welcome the Minister's remarks and I understand the dilemma. As a result of masterful negotiations, concessions have been obtained in Brussels and from the other Community states, but it has not been possible to reorganise the debate. The House is well attended, given the subject that we are debating. I should point out, too, that many of us have changed our engagements and come a long way to attend the debate, and organisations have gone to a lot of trouble to prepare for it. It might have been better to wait a few weeks until the matter was set in concrete so that the few questions that remained in dispute could have been debated. Instead, we may have to make some points that have, in part, been conceded.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman was here on Monday when the matter first came before the House. A couple of us tried to stop the directive being debated this week. We suggested to the Leader of the House that he should take it off and bring it back at a later stage because there was some argument about the Standing Orders and other matters. Perhaps it would be as well, even at this stage, to take the business off and bring it back at a more appropriate time. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that this is a typical Common Market cock-up?

Mr. Wiggin: The hon. Gentleman conducts his own permanent campaign on these matters and is most assiduous. But I am interested in the subject that we are debating tonight.

It now appears that, whatever its eventual form, the directive will place less emphasis than it should on the primary intention of moving towards the freer markets envisaged for 1992 and is unduly concerned with imposing grater restrictions on ordinary people, even though there is little—if any—evidence to suggest that it is not safe for them to possess or transport weapons. Some of the very people on whom the directive will have the most impact are individuals who have established their reputations as people of the greatest integrity and have achieved fame and honour for this country as its representatives, at international level, in a whole range of shooting disciplines.

Much of the concern of the shooting organisations is centred on the confusion which continues to reign in respect of technical errors and imprecise—at times even unintelligible—translation. One could go through the directive chapter and verse, nit-picking one's way through a confusion of ideals and intentions. A number of aspects have been identified as particularly significant. The Minister mentioned age, in respect of which a concession has been obtained, but I think that my hon. Friend should examine carefully the endless debates that we had during the passage of the Firearms (Amendment) Act about the desirability of allowing properly supervised young people to shoot or to practise target drills at a much earlier age than 18. There is no reason why that should not be allowed; indeed, many of us in the House enjoyed those privileges in our early teens. There is no question of our having a disastrous record in this matter. Very few young people have been involved in firearms accidents. We must examine the facts before jumping to conclusions.

A restriction on the possession and use of semi-automatic weapons would have serious consequences for certain sports. I am sure that the Minister will recognise that a number of Olympic and world shooting disciplines involve the use of semi-automatic weapons.

I had the feeling that my hon. Friend the Minister had dealt with the question of military weapons, but simply to prohibit a weapon because it was once put to military use or considered to be of military calibre is a clumsy and heavy-handed way of dealing with a problem which, so far as I know, does not exist.

Some of the proposals in respect of trade appear to run counter to our supposed commitment towards open borders and would be guaranteed to cause confusion. Going beyond trade interests alone, any injudicious legislation runs two risks. The first is the risk of avoidance. The other is the risk of incurring a financial commitment in terms of compensation. Following the introduction of the 1988 Act, only 4,000 semi-automatic weapons were surrendered when the compensation scheme was introduced. At that time, the Government estimated that there were 20,000 such weapons in private possession. One can only guess at the whereabouts of the balance.

Hon. Members have mentioned the requirement for "mental and physical capability". That could lead directly to many disabled sportsmen being barred from following what is often regared as a therapeutic pursuit and would directly affect such events as the Paralympics.

The Government will need to keep in mind the effect that the proposals would have on income generated by visitors from places such as America and eastern Europe who come here specifically for the shooting. I am told that in Scotland alone the income from that source is estimated at £52 million a year.

Sir Hector Monro: It is more than that.

Mr. Wiggin: My hon. Friend says that it is more than that; it is certainly a very considerable sum and one would not wish to discourage such visitors.

Some of the European officials concerned seem to be intent on using the directive as an opportunity to deny individuals the right to possess weapons of any nature. I am happy to say that our Government repeatedly stated, during the passage of the Firearms (Amendment) Act, that that was not their intention and that they sought merely to ensure that weapons in private hands neither fell into criminal hands nor were used to harm the public at large. All the shooting organisations share that sentiment.

The shooting population in this country is already subject to some of the most stringent safeguards and is still absorbing and coming to terms with the effects of recent legislation. It does not believe that it would be helpful or pertinent if the side effect of a measure intended to achieve a reduction in border controls merely led to yet more restrictions, uncertainty and expense for legitimate shooters, especially as there is little evidence to suggest that they bear any direct responsibility for lawlessness, the illegal use or possession of weapons, or any activity against the interests of the state or the wider European Community. The shooting community would point out

[Mr. Wiggin]

the contribution that shooting disciplines have made to greater harmony between the European states by way of international co-operation and friendly competition.

There are minor examples such as the possession of airgun pellets, although the Minister intimated that that point had been dealt with. The directive also requires the address of the holder to appear on a passport or identity card. There is no address on a British passport and I hope that we are not envisaging an identity card for firearms use.

I hope that the Minister will ensure that the British Shooting Sports Council's wisdom and enormous knowledge are used to the benefit of the nation and will acknowledge that our laws are already sufficiently severe without our allowing the nonsense in the directive to override them. I believe that the whole country is willing to co-operate with many of the directives which come from Brussels provided that they are sensible measures involving the harmonisation of trade and economics, but when they stray into social matters and matters of practice and habit—when, like this one, they represent sheer interference—we rather resent them. We hope that the Government will carry that message to Brussels forthwith.

8.18 pm

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): I begin by taking strong exception to the manner in which the debate has been initiated. Even without the Minister's speech and its revelations of developments of which the House had not been informed, I should have raised some questions about that. Certain matters should have been put before the House but we have not had the benefit of considering them.

In particular, I refer to the advice of the firearms consultative committee, to which the Home Office document refers but is not before us, and to the desirability of an update of the evidence of the police in this matter. From the Minister's document of 25 October it is apparent that he has received advice from the Association of Chief Police Officers, but the latest advice that I have been able to obtain is the copy of a letter that was sent to the Home Office in February which expressed great concern about the legislation. That letter, which is dated 20 February, spoke of the

"revocation of existing legislation or its supplementation by European controls being, in the view of ACPO, extremely costly in all its collective forms, financial, administrative and, most importantly, the loss to public safety."

Does ACPO's concern persist in the light of the amendments on which the Minister has reported to the House? It must be admitted that that concern was expressed in the most general terms, but it is material to considering whether we should welcome the legislation.

If we approached the debate with uncertainty about the views of the police and firearms experts, our confusion was worse confounded by the Minister who clearly has had important negotiations on matters that were giving rise to concern among the shooting fraternity, about which the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare (Mr. Wiggin) spoke so eloquently. I am bound to say that the Minister, not just as a matter of courtesy but as a matter of enabling the House to participate in an informed debate, should have taken steps before this evening to tell hon. Members of the developments prior to the debate to which he alluded. My right hon. Friend the Member for Tweeddale, Ettr Lauderdale (Sir D. Steel) wrote to the Mini 13 November raising this matter in general terms, might reasonably have expected a reply before the but no reply has been forthcoming.

I am bound to say that the debate proce extremely important in offering the House the opp to make an informed comment and possibly even a Minister in his diplomatic deliberations. We kn limits of our powers in matters flowing from the op of the Single European Act, but it does not li capacity——

Mr. Skinner: You voted for it.

Mr. Maclennan: I have no regrets about havi so, but it renders our power of advice almost l useless if we are unable to speak about an up situation in an informed way. The procedure seer severely weakened and rendered rather a mocker Minister's manner—almost in the sense that scoring points off the House by being in a pos announce matters of which we did not know. unfortunate.

There is another fundamental question ab Minister's approach that I must also raise. I refe Government's policy in respect of challenging t basis of this draft directive. It is strange that h have such substantial doubts about the basis on w draft directive is being brought forward Commission and that those doubts have not been even now. The Minister has no intention of seekin them resolved before the negotiations are concl answer to an intervention from one of his hon. Fri said that he thought that it would have been p have such matters dealt with under article 165, bu was not prepared to challenge the matter and to t the European Court. One is bound to question wh attaches any significance to the little dispute a basis of the draft directive.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We attach great significanc argument. I clearly told the House—if the hon. Ge consults the record he will find that it is so—tha waiting for the Commission's legal advisers to co to us on the basis of the paper that we have giv arguing that the article base that the Comm recommending is the wrong one. We have pre argument and we are waiting for the definitive r

Mr. Maclennan: I do not find that very convinc draft directive has been in circulation for about tw Is it really beyond the influence of Her M Government to obtain an answer from the Com legal advisers in all that time? There has been argument about the substance, but surely the base a question to be resolved before issues of such s and detail are determined. If the whole thing is great deal of effort is being unnecessarily expende Government and other Governments. I question it is sensible to wait for legal advice for about tw As vital national interests are involved and to national security, if the Government have seriou about the legal base, those doubts should h resolved before the debate.

I now move from extremely important pu issues to the substance of the draft directive. I s

much the same base as the Minister started, by attaching the highest importance to the security issues that the draft directive raises. It is clearly of great importance that no legislation that is passed by the European Community should in any way weaken the effectiveness of our controls over firearms acquisition and possession in this country. I have mentioned my uncertainty about the attitude of the police to the directive. I hope that the Minister may have something to say about the attitude of the police.

The difficulty that we face in considering security is that it plainly is an adjunct to the central purpose of the directive, which is to effect the single market and to enable people to travel more freely across boundaries whether or not they are carrying arms. As we know, the Schengen group of countries attaches much less importance than we do to border control. Therefore, these matters have been handled in a rather different way in the Schengen group. The Minister's letter of 25 October refers to the uncertainty of the attitude of other member countries—the southern member states of the Community and France in particular—to the very purposes of the directive. Perhaps he could say whether those countries have maintained Her Majesty's Government's position in the deliberations.

I doubt whether it makes sense to operate two sets of controls in this sphere within this country. There is one aspect in particular in which that appeared to be the outcome of what is happening with the proposals to introduce a European firearms pass in addition to the existing system for the British visitor's permit. I confess to some difficulty in understanding how those two systems of control over visitors will operate side by side. Perhaps the Minister can explain.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Many European countries have asked for no more than the European firearms pass. That is required by the directive, and the Schengen group of countries in particular look for no more. We look for more than that. We require the British visitor's permit in addition, to provide us with the extra security which we believe that we need.

Mr. Maclennan: That helps greatly to explain the position, but I am not entirely clear whether visitors to Britain would be required by Community law to carry one pass while Britain required an additional pass that would make the movement of, for example, those engaged in sporting activities within the Community even more difficult than at present.

It is right to emphasise that for practical reasons one does not wish to put barriers in the way of visiting sportsmen. The hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare mentioned the reasons. My information is that the value of shooting to the Scots is even higher than the £52 million suggested by the hon. Member. In February this year the Fraser of Allander Institute said that it was worth £78 million to Scotland alone. That is not an insignificant contribution to the Scottish economy, particularly as a great deal of it is spent in the less-favoured and sparsely populated areas where alternative employment is sometimes extremely hard to come by. We are not anxious to see that income lost.

I noted the opposition of sporting groups, at least at an early stage, to the provisions of article 11 of the draft directive. Article 11 would tighten control over entry from third countries into Britain. A great many Americans, east Europeans and others are interested in Britain's sporting facilities. We should not wish to make it unnecessarily more difficult for them to come here. I do not know whether the anxieties about article 11 were dealt with in the negotiations in a way that meets our needs. Perhaps the Minister could clarify that.

The minimum age limit provisions and the professional competence requirement for firearms dealers aroused the greatest anxieties among the sporting fraternity. The Minister seemed to say that those difficulties had been removed in the working group. If that is so, a considerable step has clearly been taken in removing the anxieties of those who rightly take the view that young people should not be debarred—indeed, they might reasonably be encouraged—to enjoy the sporting opportunities of shooting at targets. Young people, especially those living in rural areas who are trained in the use of firearms for vermin control on farmland, should not be inhibited in acquiring skill and competence in handling firearms at an early age. Country people throughout Britain attach great importance to such matters. We must have absolute clarity on them, not merely an assurance that the Government believe that they have got it right. It would have been better if the Government had come to the House with a firm statement in writing to enable us to be clear about the matter.

It would be appropriate for the Minister to tell us whether his view has changed from that expressed on 25 October when he said:

"It is difficult to see how partial harmonisation can achieve the establishment and functioning of the internal market."

That goes back to the legal question that I raised earlier but it is also a policy question. If partial harmonisation is not strictly necessary and will not bring about the establishment of the internal market, why are we doing it? That is a serious question. The Minister may have told us of the advance that he has made in eliminating difficulties, some of which I referred to, but that does not solve the problem that I raised. Perhaps the principle of subsidiarity should have operated in this case. It was not strictly necessary for this draft legislation to be considered. As the Minister and the House are aware, I am a strong supporter of the operation of the internal market and the development of the European Community's institutions. But I am not in favour of meddlesome legislation that gives rise to widespread anxieties about security.

I shall be delighted if the Minister can put his hand on his heart and say that disabled sportsmen will not be precluded from participating in paraplegic sporting activities as a result of changes which may or may not have been agreed in discussions. Let him be in no doubt that the majority of hon. Members would regard it as preposterous if, by a side wind, the disabled were deprived of that opportunity. It cannot be sensible and it cannot be the purpose of the legislation.

The draft directive is of considerable importance. I acknowledge that it is difficult to reconcile the interests of the various communities that have an interest in it. Plainly, some people would like to see the controls greatly relaxed. Others, particularly the police, would like to see perhaps even greater and tighter national control. Then, of course, there is the European Community dimension. I understand what the Minister is trying to do. He is probably broadly on the right lines, but if the House is to participate in ensuring that he gets it right, he will help us

[Mr. Maclennan]

considerably by making available the relevant information prior to the debate. That is perhaps the message with which I should like to leave him.

8.37 pm

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): I agree with the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) that what we really need at the end of the day is clarity about exactly where we are. My hon. Friend the Minister certainly helped us greatly tonight, but I wish to clarify several points with him because his speech was interrupted so often that he never made a firm statement on some important issues.

I begin by seeking to clarify the distinction between weapons and firearms. I caused some consternation at Edinburgh airport yesterday when I brought a skean-dhu with me to wear with my kilt at a St. Andrews night dinner tomorrow. However, it all arrived in one piece.

We seek to achieve a common denominator and harmonisation within Europe on firearms. Helpful as my hon. Friend the Minister has been, he must realise that many voluntary organisations and governing bodies such as the National Small-bore Rifle Association—of which I happen to be the president—the National Rifle Association, the British Association for Shooting and Conservation, the British Field Sports Society and the Clay Pigeon Shooting Association have all worked in recent weeks to produce intricate briefs for Members of Parliament for the debate. If they had been aware of the information that my hon. Friend the Minister would deploy early in his speech, it would have saved many people a great deal of time.

Those organisations had to go into the matter because, naturally, those who are interested in shooting are suspicious of the Government. In recent months the Home Office and the Department of the Environment had the shooting world in some turmoil over the birds directive which was to put pests on a special list. That would have been most unreasonable and, fortunately, the Government changed their mind. We are anxious to keep a close eye on what the Government are doing about shooting.

The 1988 Act, in which many hon. Members who are present were involved, showed how the Government, for the right motives, reached wrong solutions. The Act makes sporting shooting more difficult to enjoy than it should be. Many chief officers of police have different interpretations about firearms and shotgun certificates and make life difficult for legitimate sporting enthusiasts. I hope that the consultative committee set up by the Home Office will smooth out some of the continuing problems which are not going away.

Because we have already had so much detail in this debate, I can skip over some of the issues which I wished to raise. I want to be clear on where we stand on three important issues. My hon. Friend the Minister said that he was dealing with the age 18 restriction. Can he say whether, under this directive, those aged 10, 12 or 14 will be able to shoot under supervision?

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Perhaps I can help my hon. Friend on the agreement of an age limit. Our domestic law should apply to those who come from abroad and wish to shoot here. Provided that they have the right papers and a British visitor's permit, they are permitted to come.

Sir Hector Monro: That is helpful. In other British shooting public of any age can sh supervision without any problem, for exampl and in school competitions such as the Ashbur

Mr. Lloyd: I tried to explain in my openin that British domestic firearms legislation wou modified by this directive. What has chang Community rules for movement from one C country to another. Our legislation remains as

Sir Hector Monro: That is helpful. We are useful collection of Government statements wh that the Minister will put together so that th world may know where it stands. When he pro document, I hope that he will be clear abou meanings of the words, "use", "own", and because the firearms world seems to be in s about where it stands on them.

Can the Minister tell us whether air rifle pel illegal? As the hon. Member for Caithness and said, that is important, as are questions about bullets which are used in deer stalking. My hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare (Mr. Wig about weapons usually used as military weap rifles and pistols commonly used in target shoo military use or originally had one. Therefore, t good definition for dealing with firearms.

My hon. Friend the Minister was interrupt spoke about disabled people. Will he be a explicit about mental and physical capacity? H Europe would give way on that, but I am not su Who is to judge mental capacity—the chief police? Who is to judge physical capacity? passage of the 1988 Act the Government sympathetic towards disabled people and para

I remember having to divide the Hou amendment because they refused to allow disa to use self-loading rifles, which is essential for cannot withstand the normal recoil of a bolt-action rifle. The Government did no disabled in that instance. Will disabled sho problems using a rifle in this country in futu would be a harsh decision for people who enjoyment from this form of sport. One of ou shooters is a world record holder and it unfortunate if we restricted his opportunities to in competitions. I hope that the Minister will about where disabled sportsmen stand. organisations would not have raised that with detail if they were not gravely worried.

I am particularly interested in those who from without the European Community. We visitors permits and now we are to have certificate. I do not want to see controls int those who come from beyond Europe to sporting facilities. Both my hon. Friend the Weston-super-Mare and the hon. Member fo and Sutherland spoke about encouraging sp come here to enjoy our shooting facilities, those in Scotland. As the hon. Gentleman righ the Fraser of Allander Institute conducted survey and published a report this year showi worth £78 million to Scotland. A large propo sum comes from overseas visitors. It is important for the Scottish rural economy, par

hotels, restaurants and estate staff, that visitors come to shoot. Anything that prevents overseas sportsmen from coming to put money into the Scottish economy, or the English or Welsh economies, would be gravely resented. I hope that the Minister will not build up a bureaucratic licensing system for these visitors.

We are talking not only about visitors who come for sporting facilities, but about those who come for target shooting. Sporting shooting developed from the old Commonwealth. Many of our visitors come from beyond Europe to participate at Bisley and elsewhere. Australians, New Zealanders and Canadians are at the heart of the visiting shooting community. We do not want to build up a whole host of problems for them because we are harmonising a system of firearms certification within Europe.

I hope that the Minister realises that the directive has caused a furore in the shooting world, particularly in sporting and target shooting. Although what he has said shows a substantial step forward, until we have it in black and white we shall be worried that some points will again be changed in Europe. He must fight as hard as possible to help those who are interested in this legitimate form of recreation.

8.49 pm

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): My hon. Friend the Minister will have noticed that most of those who have spoken tonight have found the proposals highly disagreeable. Some have said that they will cause inconvenience to the shooting sport, others that they will cause damage and danger to the general public. Whichever way we look at it, hon. Members have spoken of the new proposals as being unnecessary, dangerous, bureaucratic and costly nonsense.

What worries me is that it is purely accidental that we have had the benefit of debating these proposals at a reasonable hour. My hon. Friend the Minister is aware of the circumstances that led to the directive being debated here today rather than in one of those anonymous Committees to which the Whips send safe people to discuss such matters so no one will notice them. We also have an obligation to the Welshmen, who did not take so long today as they usually do.

The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) was greatly exercised about the use of article 100A, but that is nothing new. The EEC Commission has been deliberately and systematically using article 100A for a variety of measures which have nothing to do with free trade. The Minister said that he has raised, and will raise, the matter with the Commission, but what we are discussing is not just a problem which may affect sportsmen or marksmen but something affecting the basic democratic rights of the House.

I am sure that the Minister will recall, as he took an interest in these matters at the time, that the then Prime Minister assured us that under the Single European Act majority voting powers would be used only in matters concerning free trade, rather than for irrelevant nonsense. The Minister may recall reading the report of the Select Committee, which sought the advice of Speaker's Counsel on one directive and was advised that if the Commission used majority voting on this directive, it could use it on anything.

I see the Minister sitting with letters from the shooting organisations and taking a great interest in them, but what can he do? We can make a complaint, but unless every member state agrees with our complaint, we have had it and the Commission will decide. If the Commission wants a majority vote, it stays a majority vote unless Portugal, France, Italy and Germany and all the others say that it is wrong. I have done some careful checking and, so far as I can discover, that has never happened, so there is a constitutional problem that we cannot ignore. While hon. Members hope for great things from 1992 and free trade, we should be aware that we are not getting free trade. For example, we are not getting it in insurance or any other sectors which count and which would help people and jobs, but we are getting piles of harmonisation on silly issues such as this, which have no real relevance to free trade.

I hope that the Minister will accept that this is a dangerous measure which could cost lives. We know that people are constantly trying to get weapons into the country—from the Republic of Ireland, but far more regularly through Belgium and other European countries. To stop this, we need regular checks, but the directive will not allow us to have those regular checks. The Minister said that we shall still be able to have target checks. If Customs and Excise have reason to suspect certain people because they look funny or because they are carrying big bags, they can make checks, but the regular checks on which we depend to find weapons and save lives will not be allowed.

The people of Northern Ireland have gone through agonies for a long time, but people throughout the country are concerned about guns and their uses, as we should be. I telephoned the Police Federation today to find out its view on this. I am sure that the Minister will know that it has strong views, and I am sure that his excellent officials will be able to tell him what it thinks. I also know what the Association of Chief Police Officers thinks, and I am sure that the Minister's officials will have had its advice. I know that it does not think that this is a grand idea. It is a dangerous idea.

I appeal to the Minister, to the Labour party and to all other parties to say what we can do about the situation. We know that the directive is illegal because the Commission is using article 100A when it should not and is taking over policy from the House of Commons. I am not being anti-European—I am anti the abuse of EEC powers by the Commission. We must do something about this, because unless we do, we shall find that in all areas of policy—even on shooting magpies, as my hon. Friend the Member for Weston-super-Mare (Mr. Wiggin) said—the EEC will decide to do something and get it through by majority voting. That is illegal and against the rules. Speaker's Counsel said that it is not just a question of interpretation. Some of the officials who go backwards and forward all the time know exactly what is happening. My hon. Friend the Minister is one of the honest ones, and he knows what is happening. He knows that huge areas of policy are being taken away illegally, and we can do nothing about it through the rules. We have to get everyone to agree that something illegal is being done, but nobody ever will, so what on earth are we going to do about it?

Mr. Maclennan: The Minister said that it would be possible to take the matter to the European Court. The oddity is that he has not done so already.

Mr. Taylor: The Minister will be able to confirm that, until a determination is made by the Council, one cannot go to the court, and if one goes to the court, the case will take two years. In which case, has the court turned down a request for extra authority for the Commission? It never does. The European Court is not a legal court. Understandably, it is a political court, biased in favour not of political parties but of taking more and more power and authority for the institutions of the Community. Any hon. Member who doubts that should consider the case of the Spanish fishermen, which led to a huge area of power being taken away. For the sake of people whose lives will be put at risk by this directive, should we not say what the House of Commons can do? We can do nothing under the existing rules, but something has to happen—something has to be done.

Regular inspection is not just about guns. I am sorry that the Minister did not make this point. Without regular inspections, other objects will come in as well, such as flickknives, knuckledusters and swordsticks, which cause great offence. My hon. Friend the Member for Weston-super-Mare will be glad to know that we still have our British law which says that such objects are illegal, and the Common Market cannot touch that British law, but without regular inspections those items will still come in, as will guns. I assure the House that the police and the Department have said that without regular checks there will be an increase in the number of such objects coming in. All of that is set out in the Select Committee report.

Sadly, as always happens when we debate anything to do with the EEC, although it is vital to our democracy, the Press Gallery is empty. All the bright twits who represent *The Times*, *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Independent* and who say that they are concerned about people and their rights are interested in everything except the EEC. That is a threat to democracy, but ideologically they think that it is the best thing since sliced bread.

Mr. Colvin: Does my hon. Friend agree with what was said the other day about the EEC—that if the European Community applied to become a member of the European Community, it would not be admitted because it does not, as an entity, conform with the democratic principles enshrined in the treaty of Rome?

Mr. Taylor: My hon. Friend makes a fair point. The European Community is not democratic in that sense. It is not as though we are transferring powers from this House to another democratic body. These are non-elected bodies. That is one reason why the previous Prime Minister, whatever the views of her people, did a fantastic job in telling the people of Britain, "We must look carefully at the whole issue of economic control by a central bank." We may or may not want it, but we in Parliament do not want to talk about it. Nobody wants to think about it. Our former Prime Minister did a great job in forcing people to say, "These matters must be examined."

There is nothing we can do about the directive at this stage, even if the Government were to describe it as scandalous and shocking. It will probably be passed by a majority vote, and there is nothing we can do about that either. We cannot do anything about the u 100A because, as we know, the Greeks and a will never agree to our proposals.

Although we can do nothing in that contex to find some procedure by which we can re House the rights which legally we should st accept that we have surrendered power to the describe that as sad or otherwise, but we mu means of drawing the line. The Minister know an illegal document in relation to article 100A has any chance even to argue that it is legal. H is a dangerous document which could cost bureaucratic and costly document which w whole new lot of controls, computers and c and all of that effort will be unnecessary. In dangerous load of rubbish. We must consider prevent this sort of thing from happening i

9.1 pm

Mr. Peter Griffiths (Portsmouth, North): I the Minister on his opening remarks and I with those who have said that there wa undesirable or improper in his providing information, beyond that given in the written I admit that I did not come to the debate wit prepared speech, because I gathered that we to the Minister's explanation first and then re matters of interest to us. That has been the pr to that extent, the Minister's comments led u the debate.

Because some hon. Members have been c Minister, they have overlooked the fact that he give us the information that many of us ha House to obtain, but he invited us to point those points on which it would be desira further progress in the working party, throug through Ministers. We should be grateful for that has been made, and the Minister was ab most of the fears that law-abiding sho constituency have been putting to me in rec

I trust that the hon. Member for Kingsto West (Mr. Randall) is not seriously thinkin the House on the issue. If he does, he will be Henny Penny. She had every right to be c acorn fell on her head, but she grossly exagge when she set out to tell the world that the s in.

It would have been nice to have all the when preparing our remarks for the deb Minister did us the courtesy of providi information. Not only has it been important that knowledge, but we should do nothin discourage Ministers from providing informa simply because it had not appeared earli documents.

The key factor is that the directive wa improve the flow of trade and the moveme across EC frontiers. I regard that as an excel I accept the point made by the Government ensure that that does not disadvantage tho with legitimate matters of trade.

Out of tonight's debate has come the almo feeling that we must not damage the interests law-abiding shooters. Although we frequ

phrase "law-abiding shooters," it should be unnecessary for it to be used. Shooters, almost by definition, are among the nation's most law-abiding people.

A constituent wrote to me this week saying that he was particularly careful in all matters concerned with shooting, even with parking and driving lest the constable with whom he happened to clash visited his home to inspect his firearms storage and security arrangements.

We must also remember that those who engage in shooting are not just passively concerned with security, as most of us are for most of the time, but are actively concerned with it—the law provides that they should be. However, they go beyond the requirements of the law and recognise that the very nature of their sport, be it target or rough shooting, could create a danger to security; they are greatly aware of that.

A misunderstanding has arisen during the debate about the security of people entering this country. Nothing in the directive will make any difference to the security checks that airlines carry out. They are conducted on the basis not of EEC directives but that people cannot board aeroplanes unless they are prepared to accept security checks, and that will continue. We have never searched every motor car coming into this country, and the idea that we have always checked everything in the past and are suddenly going to stop doing so is nonsense. Motor cars that could carry all sorts of goods come into the country and it would be physically impossible to check every one.

When intelligence suggests that an operation may be being undertaken, be it to do with drugs, weapons or people using false papers to enter this country, checks take place. That is the point at which the process of careful checks on papers, people and their property takes place, and there is no reason why that should not continue in future. As the Minister said, it will be possible to carry out security checks if there is a specific reason for doing so in an individual case, which is exactly the same as at present.

Presumably, the Minister could increase security by introducing far more checks. Border checks between Scotland and England might stop criminals with weapons moving from Glasgow to London, but nobody is suggesting that that is a desirable feature. We must appreciate that we live in a world in which people move more frequently and easily than in the past and national borders must facilitate the movement of people and goods. We need compensatory measures to ensure that there are careful checks on those coming into the EEC from outside and that we improve our intelligence networks with countries both inside and outside the European Community.

We should welcome the way in which the Government have developed the debate since the original directive was put forward. Has the Minister noted that the Vice President of the Commission responsible for the original directive was Mr. Bangemann? I do not know whether he considers that to be relevant, but I wanted to be the one to read that fact into the *Official Report*.

9.8 pm

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Waterside): It is often said that, when bad news comes, one should not shoot the messenger. The Minister came to the House this evening with news that we all wanted to hear, containing points that we were to raise in some of our speeches. He came with good news, but I have seldom known such a messenger to meet such a fusillade of shots. The reaction he received had less to do with the content of the draft directive and much more to do with the messy way in which the House deals with European legislation.

It seems pretty weird that the draft directive has been around since July 1987, yet the final amendments to it, which are so crucial and which the Minister has set out to us this evening, were not known until a few days ago. That is a strange way of proceeding.

The news that the Minister brought us, to use yet another sporting analogy, has shot our foxes. He made the very points that we were going to ask him to note before the Secretary of State went to the Council of Ministers arguing the toss on this country's behalf.

The Minister said that this debate and the directive would be of great interest to marksmen and sportsmen. I must declare an interest: I am both marksman and sportsman, and thus I am a member of a fairly large lobby. It is not often appreciated that a great many people in this country have firearm and shotgun certificates—about 1·1 million of them in all. That is 2 per cent. of the population; averaged out, it means that each of us represents about 1,300 constituents with such certificates. That is a significant lobby and it becomes vociferous when it feels that its rights are threatened.

Sportsmen and marksmen are the first to recognise the need for adequate controls on all firearms. The United Kingdom cannot be accused of not being a good European, as our regulations are probably the most stringent in Europe already. We are concerned that our rules and regulations should not be diluted by these proposals.

The firearms laws of this country had a good airing during the debate on the Firearms (Amendment) Act 1988, so there is no need to go over them again this evening. We were worried, however, that under this directive visiting sportsmen might be able to enter the United Kingdom with weapons issued to them under less stringent controls than obtain here. The Minister has reassured us to some degree about that.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) mentioned the importance of shooting in Scotland and its contribution to the Scottish economy. In February this year a report was published by the Fraser of Allander Institute, of Glasgow university, showing that shooting in Scotland produced £78 million income, of which almost 25 per cent. was said to come from overseas visitors. About 12,000 jobs in Scotland come directly or indirectly from shooting—a considerable contribution to the British economy.

I was pleased to hear from the Minister that the age limits—probably the aspect of the draft directive that worried us most—are to be changed and those enshrined in our domestic law are to prevail.

Two of the provisions of the directive have not been fully covered by my hon. Friends and need further explanation from the Minister. The first has to do with the technical difficulty of categorising weapons. As drafted, the directive could have the effect of banning rifles and pistols which are of service issue—but those weapons are the mainstay of target shooting.

The other point that worries me is the condition in the directive that possession of a firearms certificate will depend on

"the necessary mental and physical capacity"

[Mr. Michael Colvin]

of the applicant. Who will decide that? Are disabled people to be barred from taking part in a sport in which they can compete on equal terms with the able-bodied? That would be a disgrace, given the large number of paraplegic members of shooting clubs.

I recently saw in *The Times* a photograph of Prince Charles shooting while he had the use of only one arm. I assume that the directive would disallow him from possession of a firearms certificate. Incidentally, I seem to remember that the picture appeared just above a headline reading "How the Cabinet assassins struck"—but that, of course, is all history now.

We should also consider the difficulties involved in administering the provision. At present, chief constables are responsible for issuing certificates, and will not do so if they consider that the applicant is of unsound mind or unfit to be entrusted with a firearm. Will that system remain under the directive, and will the right of appeal also remain? I think that we need to know that.

Much has been said this evening about the provision of the additional firearms passes to be used in Europe under article 1(4). I feel that it will lead to much more bureaucracy, which should be avoided at all costs.

I urge my hon. Friend the Minister to listen to the views of the firearms consultative committee, under the chairmanship of Lord Kimball. The committee was set up specifically to examine and report the views of experts, who are best qualified to come up with a constructive line. I understand that the committee is to meet next week to discuss the proposals; it is a pity that it did not meet before the debate. I only hope that the documents available to the committee are more up to date than those before us tonight.

I trust that my hon. Friend will take note of what we have said this evening, and that it will strengthen his arm or those of other Ministers when they go back to Europe to discuss the matter further. Debates like this go right to the heart of the question of sovereignty. There is no doubt —if sovereignty means having control over one's own affairs—that, within the European Community, certain aspects of sovereignty are strengthened if our sovereignty is pooled with that of our partners.

I have no objection to a majority vote on what are essentially European Community matters involving all member states; however, I have the greatest possible objection to the majority vote being used to pass a directive that would impinge directly on the domestic laws of this country. I will not accept that such a vote should dictate whether we should shoot pigeons or magpies, whether it is legal for us to eat the British banger or whether a carrot is a fruit or a vegetable. Such matters are best left to our Parliament and our domestic law makers.

I believe that we have made a very good job of drafting and agreeing firearms legislation in this country—after, I may say, a good deal of agonising and debate. I think that the firearms laws that prevail here now should be left as they are, and should not be interfered with by our European partners.

9.18 pm

Mr. James Hill (Southampton, Test): I have no axe to grind. I am not the chairman of a sporting club. I have never fired a gun on a rifle range. Therefore, I speak with the great authority of those who know about the taking of sporting weapons fr another. It is almost unnecessary to go However, national security matters ha debate. This important debate will be on effectiveness of our future border contr

If the impression is given that th slackening off on border controls, ou may begin to say to themselves, "We've particular pass is all right. As a lot of w won't, therefore, go into it as rigorousl past." Terrible problems of that kind again while European legislation pa House. I hope that much of it will be pi European Standing Committees and th to ask questions that will clarify the Minister. He will not then have to meetings in Europe and tell us what he his last conversation in Brussels. I prai for telling us about these facts. The Opp to be put down in black and white, translated in a form that meets with the other member states. It is extremely d such agreements.

I think that we all agree that the deb the wrong issue. I understand that 14-ye to take guns, under supervision—I p supervision of their parents—across b that they will be able to obtain permi doubt it. The ages that were mentioned greatly.

We must ensure that the message place that at this time Customs and Ex vigilant. That applies to drugs, immig everything else. The Commissioners standards. I am sufficiently non-Europe that, although I am pro-Europea everything else. We had this problem driving licence. When these matters are able to argue the case with the maxi before us. Our sovereignty must not absurd degree—over such questions as when it comes to national security our s defended. This is probably the only m Community that is under particular t terrorism.

9.23 pm

Mr. Ken Hargreaves (Hyndburn): been wrecked by the assurances that already given, I shall be brief.

I welcome the Minister's announc articles 5(a) and 5(b). They relate to th physically and mentally handicapped. on his achievement.

I know very little about firearms constituents, Mr. Derek Waterworth, north-west region shooting associatio certain concerns of behalf of the asso that the Minister has already dealt Waterworth, however, makes two fu letter states:

"Annex 1, Category B. The need f possess soft-nosed or hollow projecti ammunition.

"Most target pistol shooters use projectiles . . . made entirely from lead alloy often with a flat nose and a hollow base, this being the most accurate configuration for a slow moving projectile over short distances. Many pistol shooters also mould their own bullets."

Mr. Waterworth asks whether it is realistic

"to make the moulding of lumps of lead the subject of legislation. The proposal is aimed at copper jacketed ammunition with a flat or hollow lead nose of the type used for hunting game but this is not made clear. The directive also seeks to ban the use of military arms by civilians. Unlike some countries on the continent there has been a long tradition here of using military arms for sporting purposes. Not to mention clay pigeon and game shooters, there are over one hundred target shooting clubs in the North West Sports Council Region. Members of these clubs have personally invested considerable sums of money in their equipment."

Mr. Waterworth said that they are worried by the directive.

Mr. Waterworth and his members will welcome the Minister's announcement. Perhaps when he replies he will give us further reassurance on the final two points.

9.25 pm

Mr. Peter Lloyd: With permission, Madam Deputy Speaker, I shall reply.

This has been a considerably longer debate than we would have had if it had started at the usual time after 10 o'clock. I make no complaint about that because I know that the subject raises considerable interest and concern among hon. Members ranging from the rules as they affect shooters to the effects on national security. Both are important. I have made long lists of the points that have been raised. If I move fairly rapidly, I hope to be able to respond to all the substantive points that have been made.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West (Mr. Randall) asked about age limits, as did many of my hon. Friends, most notably my hon. Friend the Member for Weston-super-Mare (Mr. Wiggin). The agreement on age limits reached in the working party is that existing law shall prevail. No change will be made for age limits on shooting sports and target practice. I hope that that is sufficiently clear and that it satisfies hon. Members.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West asked what documents would be required by shooters coming from other EEC countries. Under the directive, shooters will need licensing documents from their own state, which will be issued according to the law of their country. They will need the European firearms pass, which will also be issued by the particular country and is available to all those who have proper documentation and licences. We are insisting that we maintain the requirement for the British visitors permit. As hon. Members will know, that is issued only after there is a proper letter of information from a sponsor making clear the purpose of someone bringing in a gun for sporting use. It must also say what the sporting occasion is and where the gun will be used.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West asked about the pass and what it would cover. I think that I have dealt with that already. The European firearms pass is issued by member countries to those who ask for it and legitimately hold weapons under their national law.

The hon. Gentleman also asked about the information system. It will provide a record of arms movements. Each member state will appoint a national authority. It may be the national police or the country's Interpol bureau. An information exchange system under a Council of Europe convention on weapons already exists, and is said to work well by the states that have ratified it, including Germany and Italy.

Concern was expressed by a number of hon. Members about security, and several emphasised the need for intelligence if we are to ensure that firearms are not to be moved across the continent and over borders for terrorist and other criminal purposes. The rules and regulations will be an essential part of that intelligence exchange between European countries. The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West referred to the danger of excessive bureaucracy. We want the minimum possible, but in achieving the ends that the hon. Gentleman asked us to address it will be essential to exchange information between countries.

I was reminded by both the hon. Gentleman and my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) that at present we do not stop everyone entering the United Kingdom and search their baggage. Many arrivals pass through the green channel. In fact, the number of people using it is increasing. The Community aims at phasing out customs controls. The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) was also worried about security, yet it would appear from his speeches that he shares that objective. However, he apparently desires that frontier checks should continue ad infinitum. We do not have full checks now, and under the Community proposals that he supports we will not have them at all.

Mr. Maclennan: I did not make that point, and would not have done so for the reasons that the Minister gave. The hon. Gentleman knows my views on that issue. However, I am interested to know the views of the police.

Mr. Lloyd: Both the Association of Chief Police Officers and its Scottish counterpart are concerned that we should maintain the controls on visitors provided by the British visitor permit scheme. That is why we believe it is not only essential to maintain the visitor permit requirement but that we should have the right to make essential checks at our own border. On both issues, the police and the Government are at one. Achieving those conditions is part of our objective in the continuing negotiations.

Mr. Hill: Does my hon. Friend take the view that more money needs to be spent on the customs service to provide up-to-date equipment for scrutinising baggage? At present it is a question of catch as catch can, and it is not working very well. Once in a while a load of drugs is detected, but when it comes to detecting weapons surely customs halls should be equipped with more high-tech equipment.

Mr. Lloyd: Improved technology as well as improved intelligence can help. It is a constant battle to stay ahead and to detect and catch people who bring weapons into the country for illegitimate purposes.

The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland asked whether the negotiated directive will touch on movements to and from non-EC states. It will not, except in so far as it implies a strengthening of checks on visitors from countries outside the Community. The same question was of concern to my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro), albeit from a different point of view.

The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland and my hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin) mentioned the firearms consultative

[Mr. Lloyd]

committee. We have kept the committee up to date with developments. My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary relies upon this small but important committee for advice. It will meet next week, and no doubt will give us the benefit of its informed views.

I must take issue with the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland about the treaty base. He seemed to believe that this should be settled first in the negotiations. As he is interested in EEC matters, I am surprised that he had not yet come across the practice whereby a directive is negotiated and, although a treaty base may be in mind, it is not finally determined until what should go in the directive is agreed. As this directive has taken shape, we have made clear our opinion on what the base should be. Some countries, particularly Ireland, share our views.

Mr. Maclennan: I have, of course, come across this procedure before, as the hon. Gentleman will recall, because it was raised by the Government in the debate on enfranchisement of foreign nationals from European Community countries. I am surprised that this practice continues. To reach a detailed agreement before deciding whether it has been established on a proper legal basis is to put the cart before the horse. This is not a matter with which the Minister can deal unilaterally, but it is open to the Government to challenge it and to seek an advisory opinion of the European Court.

Mr. Lloyd: We have been challenging it, but discussions go on in parallel. That is why our arguments about the treaty base of the emerging directive were made before completion of the directive. The directive has not yet been agreed.

My hon. Friend the Member for Weston-super-Mare raised several specific and detailed points. The semi-automatic weapons element of the draft directive has been dropped. It would have caught self-loading pistols used by, for example, target shooters. The military calibre ban has also been dropped. We expect new and better wording to be included that will not affect target and sporting shooters.

My hon. Friends the Members for Weston-super-Mare and for Dumfries asked about airgun pellets. That aspect is not affected because the domestic law on sales to young persons and possession by prohibited persons which we already have still applies.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries was worried about intensification of controls at external borders to which the directive referred, and I mentioned that point in responding to the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland. The fears that this provision will damage the tourist industry are unjustified. The article is simply intended to improve public safety in Europe as a whole. It does no less than require that all non-EEC visitors who wish to bring firearms into the Community for sport or competition should first obtain the certification that member states think is proper.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries will find that the directive requires us to demand no more than we demand already of visitors who come here for shooting, which is such an important part of the industry of some parts of Scotland. I hope that my hon. Friend will feel reassured because the directive does not present any threat in that area.

My hon. Friend also referred to paraplegic shooters and to disabled shooters in general. We expect that in the new directive the limitations on the disabled will be wholly removed. We do not believe that such limitations are necessary. The working party agreed, and when the Commission publishes the next directive the limitations should not be included. I hope that that will reassure my hon. Friend and other hon. Members who are concerned about that point. However, I must stress for the sake of accuracy that certain minor limitations in existing firearms legislation—and my hon. Friends knows them better than I do—will continue to be in force. I stress again that our domestic law governs the rules in this area.

My hon. Friend also mentioned the military weapons ban, which has now been dropped. The definitions that we expect to be in place will not ban normal rifles and pistols; they will ban only automatic-firing military weapons. My hon. Friend also referred to age limits, but I have dealt with that in replying to the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West.

My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East was very worried about the treaty base. I understand what he says and he will understand, not least because I responded to him and to the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland earlier, that we share his concern. We believe that the Commission is proposing the wrong treaty base. I can do no more that to repeat that we have put our arguments and that we expect a formal response. Until we have that response, it would not be useful to ask me how we shall decide to respond to it. Our response will depend on how strong we think the arguments are.

Many hon. Members referred to checks for security purposes. It is essential that we have rules that enable us to feel as secure as possible, and it is essential that in future we are no less secure than we are now. Within Europe, the old-fashioned customs checks are being reduced. Most travellers go through the green channel, and we have to rely on intelligence work and on the other ways of gathering information so that we can target our checks on the baggage and documentation on which our information suggests that we should most efficiently concentrate. That is how we now secure our frontiers against weapons and against undesirable elements such as drugs or other contraband. We do not secure our frontiers by having the right to challenge people who are going through the green channel.

I cannot stress too strongly that we believe that the necessary parts of the directive are those criticised by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West for being bureaucratic. They will help to ensure that intelligence information, especially information on the movement of arms consignments, is available to the authorities. We also believe that it is essential that the British visitors permit should continue to be required. That is a central part of the argument that we have still to make in the working party.

Mr. Randall: I am grateful to the Minister for his comments, but can he tell the House how much that information system will cost?

Mr. Lloyd: I do not know. We must consider that carefully and sensibly. I suspect that, even without the present directive, we should want to establish and expand such an information exchange. The system may not cost much more than we should anyway have spent—possibly

no more. The agreements which have already been ratified and which are in force in Germany and Italy seem to work well.

I think that I have answered most of the points raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside. I understand his argument that matters which seem to have been hanging fire for years suddenly move at great speed. Whether we like it or not, that is the way in which negotiations appear to be carried on in the Community. When an issue such as this comes to the forefront, we may move very fast on it in a series of meetings. That is why I shall say little about the fact that I was able to give the House what I knew was good news. With fast-moving negotiations, it is difficult to ensure that the House is kept fully informed, and I apologise to hon. Members on both sides of the House who came to the debate with well-prepared speeches only to find that the very argument that they had intended to press on me already seemed to have been conceded by our colleagues in Europe.

Mr. Wiggin: I am sure that we all accept that the Minister acted in good faith. Will he reaffirm, however, that the basic purpose of the directive is to ease trade across national frontiers?

Mr. Lloyd: That is part of the argument. The Community argues that the directive is intended to ease trade across frontiers and that is why it has chosen the present base, although the choice may have been influenced by the fact that it is a qualified majority base. We argue that the directive concerns the free movement of people who happen to be carrying weapons with them and that is why we are arguing for a different base. Both arguments concern ease of movement, whether it be of people or of goods.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Portsmouth, North (Mr. Griffiths) for his helpful and constructive remarks. It was good to hear at least one hon. Member say that he wholeheartedly welcomed my remarks.

I think that I have answered the two additional questions raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Hyndburn (Mr. Hargreaves).

I am grateful for the wise remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Southampton, Test (Mr. Hill), who knows well how the Community works, having himself been a member of the European assembly.

I hope that the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West will not advise his hon. Friends to vote against the directive. It would be a pity if he did, because I think that he agrees with the general tenor of the Government's approach. We want this debate to be read and we want it to be understood within the Community, and if the Opposition voted against the directive it would look as though part of the House was not anxious for the Government to continue to press the points that we are determined to press. Having said that, I know why the hon. Gentleman argued as he did. As I said, I understand that hon. Members would like to have the most up-to-date information before a debate. With a fast-moving negotiation, that is not always possible, but I shall certainly speak to those who are responsible for these matters, for providing background papers and for the way in which the business is managed. Hon. Members' remarks will be drawn to their attention to be carefully considered.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 78, Noes 15.

Division No. 15] **[9.49 pm**

AYES

Alison, Rt Hon Michael	Knapman, Roger
Amess, David	Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Amos, Alan	Lawrence, Ivan
Arbuthnot, James	Lightbown, David
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*	Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*	Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Bowis, John	Macfarlane, Sir Neil
Brazier, Julian	MacGregor, Rt Hon John
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*	Mans, Keith
Burt, Alistair	Maples, John
Carrington, Matthew	Mates, Michael
Chapman, Sydney	Monro, Sir Hector
Colvin, Michael	Neubert, Michael
Curry, David	Nicholls, Patrick
Dorrell, Stephen	Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Dunn, Bob	Paice, James
Fenner, Dame Peggy	Patnick, Irvine
Fishburn, John Dudley	Portillo, Michael
Forman, Nigel	Redwood, John
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman	Sackville, Hon Tom
Fox, Sir Marcus	Soames, Hon Nicholas
Freeman, Roger	Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Gale, Roger	Stanbrook, Ivor
Goodlad, Alastair	Stern, Michael
Gorst, John	Stevens, Lewis
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*	Sumberg, David
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*	Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Hague, William	Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Hampson, Dr Keith	Tredinnick, David
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*	Viggers, Peter
Harris, David	Waller, Gary
Hawkins, Christopher	Warren, Kenneth
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney	Wells, Bowen
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael	Widdecombe, Ann
Hill, James	Wiggin, Jerry
Hordern, Sir Peter	Wood, Timothy
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*	Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Irvine, Michael	
Jack, Michael	**Tellers for the Ayes:**
Janman, Tim	**Mr. Tim Boswell and**
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*	**Mr. Neil Hamilton.**
Kirkhope, Timothy	

NOES

Bellotti, David	Pike, Peter L.
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*	Randall, Stuart
Cummings, John	Skinner, Dennis
Howells, Geraint	Taylor, Rt Hon J. D. *(S'ford)*
Hoyle, Doug	Wallace, James
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*	
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*	**Tellers for the Noes:**
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*	**Mr. Don Dixon and**
Maclennan, Robert	**Mr. Frank Haynes.**
Nellist, Dave	

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House takes note of European Community Documents Nos. 10074/89 and 8836/90, relating to controls on the acquisition and possession of weapons; and endorses the Government's view that any Directive must preserve the right of Member States to make those checks that are necessary for public security and public safety and that any additional burden on business should be kept to a minimum.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Town and Country Planning

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.),

That the draft Town and Country Planning (Fees for Applications and Deemed Applications) (Amendment)

Regulations 1990, which were laid before this House on 16th October, in the last Session of Parliament, be approved.—*[Mr. Sackville.]*

Question agreed to.

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING (SCOTLAND)

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.),

That the draft Town and Country Planning (Fees for Applications and Deemed Applications) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 1990, which were laid before this House on 16th October, in the last Session of Parliament, be approved.—*[Mr. Sackville.]*

Question agreed to.

CARAVANS (STANDARD COMMUNITY CHARGE AND RATING) BILL

Ordered,

That if the Caravans (Standard Community Charge and Rating) Bill be committed to a Committee of the whole House, further proceedings on the Bill shall stand postponed and that as soon as the proceedings on any Resolutions come to by the House on Caravans (Standard Community Charge and Rating) Bill [Money] and Caravans (Standard Community Charge and Rating) Bill [Ways and Means] have been concluded, this House will immediately resolve itself into a Committee on the Bill.—*[Mr. Sackville.]*

St. Helier Hospital, Sutton

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Sackville.]*

10.1 pm

Sir Neil Macfarlane (Sutton and Cheam): I wish to raise the subject of security at St. Helier hospital in my constituency. The debate takes on an additional tragic dimension because of the double tragedy at Wakefield earlier this week, which affected hon. Members—in all corners of the House. My hon. Friend the Minister will be as shocked and saddened as I am, but our right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has acted quickly to inquire into precisely what happened. It throws hospital security well on to the national health service agenda. Some guidance is essential now from the Department.

I shall outline the circumstances of a horrendous crime committed in St. Helier hospital, Sutton. The hospital serves a wide area, including my constituency, and enjoys a considerable reputation throughout many parts of south London and Surrey. The horrendous crime was perpetrated against a constituent.

On 14 October 1990, a young girl of only 11 years was raped and indecently assaulted in the children's ward. I am certain that my hon. Friend will share my prime concern not only about the background to this terrible crime, but about the overall security of the whole site, the buildings and the unit. I am deeply concerned about the welfare of nursing and medical staff, clerical and administrative staff, maintenance, professional and technical staff as well as the welfare of the patients.

The father of the child wrote to me. His letter states:

"My daughter has got a bit better physically and is now able to walk without help for over a week. She still gets very tired both physically and mentally but we hope and pray that as time goes by she will feel better."

Nobody can describe the distress felt by the parents, the community and, I suppose, the nation at large that a defenceless child left in the care of the local hospital could have been subjected to such an outrage. None of us can imagine the anguish of the parents of the girl as they try to help her come to terms with her terrible experience. Nobody in this House or outside it can appreciate the terror felt by the child who was unable to cry for help, alone in a cubicle and unsupervised, while the two nurses on duty were grappling with an emergency admission. Tragically, unknown to them, the real emergency was being enacted only yards away.

I emphasise that there were only two people on duty in that children's ward. I suppose that my hon. Friend and the inquiry board will query whether that level of staffing was adequate. One has to bear it in mind that the hospital and the area health authority are responsible for the girl's safety. This heinous crime should never have been allowed to happen. The fact that it did raises serious questions about staffing levels, both nursing and security, the quality of control and the direction exercised by the Merton and Sutton health authority and by the district general manager.

I am alarmed that my constituents were not given a little more tender loving care when it most mattered. The father said in his letter to me:

"Since they (Hospital Admin.) have found out from my wife that I am in contact with you regarding this incident their whole attitude has suddenly changed and they are now, at a

very late stage, being extremely apologetic and diplomatic in their replies. I hope they do not give evasive answers to either you as my M.P. or to myself."

I hope that my hon. Friend will be able to comment on a number of points that need urgent consideration and, no doubt, action. We need to know how security requirements were co-ordinated between the Department of Health and the Merton and Sutton health authority, and with the St. Helier hospital itself. We need to know what instructions or guidelines were issued by the Department and whether they were followed to the letter of the law by the hospital.

If my hon. Friend's committee is satisfied on those points, will he consider issuing further and tougher guidelines? On 26 November, following the tragedy at Wakefield last week, the British Medical Association, through the voice of Dr. Patricia Price, a retired doctor from Birmingham, and one of the two BMA representatives on the Department of Health advisory committee on violence, said:

"Recommendations on training, preventive measures and other aspects to help reduce the incidence of violence were made in our report and health authorities were advised to put them into effect. Unfortunately, these recommendations have only been partially taken up. We recognised that we could not eliminate violence, but in view of this sad incident I would ask all health authorities to take a fresh look at their existing procedures to see whether they need updating."

What security system was in place at St. Helier at the time of the rape of this child? Is my hon. Friend satisfied that it was adequate? Is there any evidence of negligence by the security firm involved, or was it given inadequate and vague guidance by the hospital? Why was the child moved from the larger ward into the small private room at that time? How was and is liaison between security staff and the medical staff conducted? Is it good, and are the rules laid down scrupulously observed by all concerned? Were they observed on 14 October?

I had a communication today from the BMA's parliamentary officer, who has highlighted something that had been expressed by its members. The letter says:

"I understand from BMA members working at the hospital that the paediatric ward is situated at a distance from the main hospital and is somewhat cut off and also that there is no fence surrounding the hospital. I also understand that a number of female houseofficers have felt nervous about working at the hospital at night."

It seems that there have been general site security problems at this large hospital for some time and that the public and many schoolchildren use the gate at the rear of the hospital as a short cut through the hospital grounds. I am also told that people are allowed to walk their dogs and ride their bikes in the grounds and that shopping trolleys are wheeled across a corridor which is a connection between hospital units and blocks. There appears, sadly, to be no authority to stop them, and I suspect that many other hospitals face the same difficulties.

There are some interesting and revealing facts that the Minister may need to review in the light of this occurrence and the most recent horrendous crimes in Wakefield. Security at St. Helier until July 1989 was the responsibility of the portering staff. That in itself seems an onerous task for people who have other prime functions to perform and I find it astonishing, given the growth in crimes of violence on hard-working hospital staff in the past 10 to 15 years. One wonders how many other NHS hospitals still depend on that type of security.

The bitter irony is that, rightly and properly, the St. Helier hospital management wanted a more professional approach to security and appointed Gardner Merchant to handle site security. I hope that the Minister and his officials will be able to determine where responsibility lies when a private contractor moves into an NHS unit. Does that contractor take over duties without any day-to-day involvement of the hospital staff, and how frequent is that contact?

I have the feeling that, despite the devoted excellence of the staff in all quarters of St. Helier hospital, something is lacking in management direction. One wonders whether the reception area is manned properly at all times. I am told that hospital staff are vulnerable at weekends, especially on Saturday nights. Who supervises the security office, and what studies have been made by hospital and authority management staff of the work of the one person in the security control office? For what hours is the reception area manned?

I fear that there is anxiety and a lack of confidence in those responsible for the management of some aspects of the hospital, but is it their fault? Is not the unit at St. Helier too large for efficient and effective day-to-day control? Is not the site disadvantageous? What is the infrastructure like from the point of view of future planning, direction and control? Much work must be done now to restore confidence and morale.

There is another element of confusion. I received a letter from the chairman of the proposed St. Helier NHS trust saying:

"The security at St. Helier is arguably the best in the region and has been recognised by the staff as a huge improvement on the pre-privatisation system."

Unfortunately, the evidence at present does not point to that. He goes on:

"No-one associated with any normal hospital can expect prison-like security."

Of course not, and we do not want that, but we want an effective balance between the two extremes. He goes on:

"The inquiry found no negligence, but made some recommendations as to additional security."

Many questions must be answered. It is for the police to identify the way in which this depraved man was able to enter the hospital, and to bring him to justice, but that will not bring back this child's happy, carefree, innocent former life, probably now gone for ever. It is for the area health authority to determine whether security and nursing systems broke down, as in time they were bound to under the present administration in so large a hospital on such an unsatisfactory site; and it is for the district health authority to determine the capacity of an administrator who described this disgraceful and repulsive assault on an innocent child asleep in a hospital bed as "an untoward incident."

It is for the Minister's Department to determine whether the hard-stretched medical services in the hospital are receiving the direction and support that they have a right to expect, or whether the Merton and Sutton health authority has been negligent. I do not point the finger at anybody, but the time has come for the investigation to be made public and for the parents of their 11-year-old daughter to be made fully aware of what took place.

10.13 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Stephen Dorrell): My hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam (Sir N. Macfarlane) is right to be outraged by the incident that took place in St. Helier hospital. He takes the district general manager to task for

[Mr. Stephen Dorrell]

using the phrase "an untoward incident". While that may be national health service terminology, it certainly does not properly express the sense of outrage that any decent person would feel on reading the background to that incident. In addition, it does not express the sense of disappointment felt in the district health authority that the incident should have taken place in one of its hospitals. However, my hon. Friend should not read into that choice of words any sense that the health authority is any less concerned by the sad and tragic incident than he is or any right thinking person would be.

I associate myself and the district health authority with the sympathy that my hon. Friend expressed, primarily for the victim of the terrible crime, whose life is at risk of being scarred by what happened, at the very least for a long time, and possibly for ever. It is right that I should also associate myself and the district health authority with the sympathy expressed by my hon. Friend for the victim's family, as it is to them that the prime burden falls of trying to rebuild the victim's confidence, and bolster her belief and desire to pursue her childhood into a full and fulfilled adulthood. To that extent, the district health authority and I share my hon. Friend's sense of outrage and his sympathy for the victim and her family.

My hon. Friend asked me to go into some detail on the Government's attitude toward security in hospitals. As I think my hon. Friend would recognise, that is not an easy subject, particularly when set against the background of the incident at St. Helier hospital and the even more tragic incident of the murder of two people at Pinderfields general hospital earlier this week. Those are terrible crimes, which raise with a new urgency the difficult problems faced by hospital managers every day of their working lives as they try to secure a proper balance in the security policies pursued by their hospitals.

A hospital manager has to have a clear policy and to recognise his responsibility for the security of the premises, staff and patients. An important part of his duties is to ensure that he takes the necessary steps to discharge that responsibility. Proper security precautions must be taken in hospitals to ensure that NHS property is not stolen, NHS staff are not subjected to personal abuse, physical threats and violence of the sort that we saw earlier this week, and patients on NHS property do not become victims of the sort of terrible incident that we are discussing. Those are the primary responsibilities of NHS managers in dealing with security.

However, we must also remember that a hospital is a place of open access and it is important that we do not pursue a security policy that makes the legitimate visitor to a hospital feel that he has to get past a security guard before his condition can be treated. That difficult balance must be struck. The key of any successful security policy in an NHS hospital is the word "balance." We must meet our proper security obligations without making the visitor to an NHS hospital feel that he has to justify himself to the security guard. Many of the people who come to NHS hospitals are either suffering from a condition requiring urgent treatment, so that the last thing they want to do is negotiate their way over a security hurdle, or are emotionally upset because they are the friends and relatives of people who may be ill. The last thing relative of a cancer victim wants to encounter is a stro security guard. A difficult balance must be struck.

My hon. Friend has asked how the Department trie strike this balance and to discharge our responsibili First, we must recognise that security in NHS institut is necessarily and rightly the responsibility of manage those institutions. We cannot have Ministers secc guessing routine day-to-day managerial decisions in e hospital around the country—that way lies disaste firmly believe that the best way of ensuring efficient effective management of the NHS is to give manager authority to allow them to discharge their tasks and to support them when they make reasonable effort discharge them.

That is not to say that there is no place for guidance support for these managers. That is why in 1984 Government supported the production by the Nati Association of Health Authorities of an NHS secu manual, which is the reference volume that all N managers use to assess and develop their security poli

The National Association of Health Authorities Trusts, as it is now, proposed that the document shoul updated. In the Department's initial response we sugge that NAHAT should recover the cost of a revised secu manual from the sale of the books to health authoriti have reviewed that decision in the light of the recent ev in my hon. Friend's constituency and in Pinderf hospital earlier this week, and I have today asked £20,000 to be made available to NAHAT to meet pre-production costs of an updated version of the mar I am sure that NAHAT will produce an equally valu updated version that will take into account re experience. I hope that that shows the seriousness which the Government view recent incidents and determination to ensure that the lessons from them sh be learnt and applied.

I distance myself from some of the criticisms mad my hon. Friend of the way in which the incident i Helier hospital was acted upon by Merton and Su health authority. The authority is entitled to some c for having quickly set up an inquiry to look into al circumstances and to learn the lessons from the inci Merton and Sutton health authority spends £140,0 year on security at St. Helier hospital. Clearly, security did not work in this case, so the authority's re is not perfect, but security is taken seriously at the hosp

My hon. Friend suggested that part of the answer l the number of nurses on the children's ward. He ri said that there were two on duty that night—but he di say that it was a Saturday night and that there were patients on the ward. Two nurses for five patients Saturday night cannot be said to represent thin sta levels, and I do not believe that the right response security problem is necessarily an increase in staff nu levels.

More important, perhaps, is the fact that we shoul try to debate specific security precautions—in a sp hospital—on the Floor of the House. I take some cor from the knowledge that the health authority set proper committee to examine the issue quickly, and that committee in turn reported within a fortnight c incident.

Let me quote two of the comments made in committee's report. First, it states:

"it is the considered opinion of the Committee . . . following extensive interviews and receipt of comprehensive written reports and evidence, that security arrangements at St. Helier Hospital have improved over recent years, are valued by those working within the hospital environment and have been found to be a greater level of comprehensiveness than a number of systems in comparable hospitals."

That is not the report of a committee overwhelmingly concerned by its findings—although it went on to make a number of proposals, including some that were touched on by my hon. Friend, on such matters as the gate at the back of the hospital and the need for proper fencing round the hospital. Those proposals were considered, and recommendations were made—recommendations which the health authority has said it will take very seriously.

Secondly, the report states:

"It is considered that the staffing levels generally employed by Unitrust"—

the security firm—

"at St. Helier Hospital are adequate."

Although the report does not say—indeed, it could not, in the circumstances—that everything in the hospital is wonderful and no improvements can be made, it gives qualified support to the security policy pursued there and makes a number of detailed proposals for its improvement.

Let me quote from another report about the incident—by Merton and Sutton community health council, which is not always a friend of hospital management. It is on record as saying:

"Given the timescale the Committee conducted a thorough investigation"—

I take comfort from that.'

"The report and background evidence compiled show that St. Helier Hospital is comparable if not better than other hospitals with regards to security."

It also states:

"The report indicates an improvement in security since the appointment of a specialist security firm and an improvement in the security consciousness of staff".

I hope that my hon. Friend accepts that that suggests that the health authority has taken the problem seriously. It has set up a committee to advise it on how steps can be taken to improve the position and, furthermore, the committee's report has been examined by the CHC, which has declared itself satisfied that it is a serious piece of work which makes sensible proposals about how improvements can be made.

We are talking about a tragic incident, which demonstrates the existence of a problem to which we have not yet found a wholly satisfactory answer. I hope that my hon. Friend will welcome the fact that the Government have acted today to provide additional money to ensure that the NHS security manual is fully up to date, and that all the lessons of recent experience are learnt and applied. I hope that he will also accept that the district health authority has taken action to try to ensure locally that lessons are learnt, and that at all levels in the NHS—local management and Department of Health—we shall do what we can; but, if I may return to my first point, we must recognise that security policy in NHS hospitals is properly and inevitably a matter of balance.

It would be wholly irresponsible for any Minister to stand here and say that any steps taken by him, or any taken by NHS managers, can constitute an absolute assurance that such an incident will never happen again. Such an assurance cannot be given; the assurance that I do give is that we will try hard to learn the lessons of these incidents, and also try to stop them from happening again.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-nine minutes past Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 30 November 1990

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

The Environment

9.34 am

Mr. Michael Neubert (Romford): I beg to move,

That this House, while welcoming the general improvement in people's living standards and the increasing freedom which they enjoy in their everyday lives, believes these advances must now be more closely matched by a quality of life in which clean air, pure water, unpolluted beaches, graffiti-free buildings, litterless streets, reduced noise levels, efficient waste management and recycling of material resources and support for the maintenance of our historic heritage, together with other enhancements of the natural and urban environment, will all assume much greater importance; and calls on the Government, through the necessary minimum regulation, education and encouragement of individual self-discipline, to continue to play its full part in developing a healthier, safer and more attractive environment for all our people, in town and country alike.

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): My hon. Friend mentioned clean air. Did he read the medical briefing in *The Times* on 1 November, entitled, "Dose of blocked flue"? In that article, Dr. Thomas Stuttaford described the problems of blocked flues in people's homes and the danger of carbon monoxide poisoning. He said:

"Minor degrees of carbon monoxide poisoning provide a wide variety"—

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman may well have an opportunity to make a speech later. This is an intervention.

Mr. Field: I am coming to a conclusion, Mr. Speaker. The article stated:

"Minor degrees of carbon monoxide poisoning provide a wide variety of vague symptoms: headaches, muscle weakness, dizziness, breathlessness, and an intellectual deterioration accompanied by a poor memory."

Does my hon. Friend agree that that is something from which the Opposition are suffering?

Mr. Neubert: This may be one of those occasions that have a large number of unusual features. My hon. Friend's intervention, even before I began my speech, is one of them. I missed the report in *The Times*, and I am grateful to my hon. Friend for drawing it to my attention. I shall go to the Library as soon as the debate has ended and bring myself up to date.

It is almost 40 years since I joined the Conservative party and began in active politics. In all that time, I cannot recall anything to match the intensity of the events of the past few weeks. The leadership contest in the Conservative parliamentary party has taken up every waking minute and hour, and it has dominated the media. Yet on Wednesday 14 November, the very day on which the challenger declared his intention to stand for the leadership and battle was joined, it was business as usual in the House of Commons, including the ballot for private Members' motions.

As chance would have it, I was first in line to sign the ballot book, and I took the opportunity to sign my name against No. 1. When No. 1 came out first in the ballot, enabling me to initiate today's debate, I realised what a simple system it was. When I came to sign the ballot book for the private Members' day next Friday, I did not make the same mistake—I signed against No. 87. I am happy to leave the debate to my hon. Friend the Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess) and other hon. Friends while I keep my programme of engagements for that day.

When it came to choosing a subject for debate, it was difficult to concentrate on policies when personalities were so much the order of the day. With a parliamentary day at my disposal, I thought that to raise the subject of people's local environment would be worth while. I am pleased that a number of my hon. Friends and other hon. Members are present to support my choice, and I look forward to hearing their contributions. I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Minister for his attendance and participation in the debate. He has achieved significant progress already in his time at the Department.

Another reason why I thought that my choice of subject would be appropriate is that in the six days of debate on the Loyal Address the environment did not feature. The choice of subjects was a matter for the official Opposition, so in raising the subject today I am repairing their omission. I am giving the House an opportunity, at the start of a new Session, to debate the many important issues.

The importance that the Government attach to the environment is demonstrated by the passage of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and the publication this year of the White Paper "This Common Inheritance." Its importance was underlined by our new Prime Minister who, speaking for the first time as premier outside No. 10 Downing street, referred to an "open society", and to the importance of

"a better quality of life for all citizens."

An uncharacteristic lack of modesty on my part allows me to point out that his words echo some of mine in the motion, which was printed the day before he made that speech. That shows the unity of purpose and outlook that characterises the Conservative party—Front and Back Benches alike.

On that historic occasion, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister referred also to the general uplifting of standards that the people of this country have enjoyed over the past eleven and a half years. That cannot be taken for granted. There could not be a starker contrast than that between the benefits of private enterprise, free-market capitalism as embodied and personified by this country's Conservative Government and the prospect of starvation in the Soviet Union, where the socialist state system has held so much sway for the past 70 years. That situation is a cause for great concern, compassion and fellow feeling for our fellow human beings, but we should not allow that to blind us to the system that has brought the Russian people to that catastrophic pass. We have the luxury this morning of indulging in a debate on the quality of life, whereas mothers in Moscow are worried about life itself and whether they will have sufficient food to allow their young children to survive the winter. Let us be clear about the benefits of the society in which we live and the principles that activate our policies by comparison with state socialism.

[Mr. Neubert]

My motion is not so much a subject for debate as an agenda for action. It mentions a number of issues that I shall raise, but it does not pretend to be exclusive. No doubt it will be added to by my hon. Friends and others with issues that they consider important, but the motion does serve to highlight some of the principal concerns of the public, particularly in our towns and cities—and most notably of all in our capital of London, where I have the privilege of representing Romford, which is on the city's outer, eastern edge.

Clean air and pure water have long been regarded as everyone's birthright, yet increasingly we see that even they cannot be taken for granted. Members of Parliament, and certainly myself, often find it difficult to point to any legislation that can irrefutably be said to have conferred benefits on the human race. I have always had the greatest confidence in pointing to the Clean Air Act 1956, which undoubtedly benefited the people of this country. It transformed the atmosphere in our cities and removed that Dickensian miasma of life-threatening industrial smog that was such a killer on many past occasions.

Even that achievement of the Government is now put at risk by the increasing freedom, brought about in turn by increasing prosperity, of people to own and drive their own cars, pumping poison into the atmosphere and polluting the street scene for millions. I will give credit where it is due to the Government as I progress through my speech, and I acknowledge that the differential price of lead-free petrol has produced a rapid increase in its use, and thus has significantly reduced the level of pollutants in the atmosphere. That is an example of the role that the Government can play—though as I shall make plain, I do not look to the Government for every contribution in achieving that which we would all like to see. However, in respect of lead-free petrol at least, Government action has proved beneficial and effective in a short time.

London Transport has made a major contribution by banning smoking on the underground. That action was forced upon it by public outrage at the loss of life in the King's Cross fire rather than by health considerations. It followed up that decision with the announcement the day before yesterday that smoking is also to be banned on London buses. That is good news for the 4 million passengers who use London Transport's fleet of 5,000 buses. It has the environmental advantage, as well as the health benefit, that the travelling public will no longer find themselves ankle-deep in cigarette cartons, Cellophane, fag ends and ash—all the detritus of modern pollution that much dismays visitors from other countries, where the public transport systems are often spotless.

London Transport has always suffered the handicap of being first in the field with its underground. Some of its stations and tunnels were constructed in the 19th century, but now it has the chance to come up to date and to run not only an efficient transport operation but one that looks as smart as the transit systems of other countries. One that comes to mind is Washington DC. A clean transport system will be a great asset to our city, and that is the kind of standard we should try to set.

I touch on a theme that will recur in this debate, in referring to the higher expenditure that better environmental standards will incur. However, that investment will be well worth while and advantageous. Self-interest will determine the need for high expenditure. It wi idealistic dream, but a matter of self-in alternative will be a fall in traffic as people ar the idea of using public transport; they will ab other forms. We shall find ourselves in a vic until the subway system becomes dirty and dar a risk to all who use it. I pay tribute to Londo for its courage in leading public opinion awa belief that smoking is an embellishment to the and in banning it completely from its transp

There is certainly a need for greater invest water supplies and water industry. The Riv which flows past this place, was at one time a if one fell into it there was little point in being Today, the Thames supports 60 varieties of attractive part of the townscape, which has enc development of residential and commercial p both banks. That again proves that there is self-interest in creating a pleasing enviro Thames is once more worthy of the capital thr it flows.

The National Rivers Authority, which wa the legislation to privatise the water industry, of the strongest independent environmental agencies in Europe. We can look to the Nati Authority to maintain the quality of our wat have never had any problems about priva Romford because we have always had a pr supply, supplied by the Essex Water compa been the Member for that constituency for m years, I can testify that in all that time I have up complaints with the water company on occasions. So I have every confidence in the p industry. In the next 10 years it plans to invest £28 billion—£5,000 a minute. That will do wo quality of our water. By comparison with developed countries, British water is alread quality, but this investment is needed to continuing quality. The higher charges whic from the need to finance such investment will b while if it ensures the quality of such a vital to life.

The Government have taken action t marine waters around our coastline, and pollution of beaches. Swimming in the sea from our beaches never used to entail any ris nor should it have done. However, it is now disease and often of viral infection. Appar affected one does not need to ingest such infec can be absorbed through the skin. Ther imperative for us to clean up our act in that

In 1987—the European Year of the Enviro European Commission launched the blue award scheme. At present we have 29 such that is not nearly enough. We must give encou that more reach the same high standard. I a that the planned huge investment in sewage tr achieve a much cleaner coastline environmen

Seaside resorts and coastal towns, dependi upon tourism for their livelihood, have an inte clean, tidy and healthy. But my motion is prompted by the squalor of our inland towns cities—notably London. Earlier in the yea Singapore, which is a small, highly suc prosperous island state. Despite being a hive activity, and having a limited amount of spac

is like a garden suburb. The streets are clear of all litter and refuse. Traffic congestion is limited in the town centre, and the wide avenues, with well-planted shrubberies and grass verges, are immaculately kempt and are free from all rubbish. The contrast could hardly be more stark. For those who persist in the view that the east is synonymous with primitive living conditions and the west has more civilised standards, it comes as a shock to find that the reverse can be the case. One realises how far our standards have sunk in that respect when one returns to England and drives from Heathrow along our urban roads, which are strewn with every kind of rubbish, to Westminster.

My constituency of Romford, which is otherwise an agreeable place in which to live and work, has not escaped this modern decline. In recent years we have had a problem with litter in the town centre, to such an extent that the local paper, the *Romford Recorder*, has embarked upon a tidy town campaign. It persuaded the previous council to introduce "operation clean sweep" and new equipment to combat the rising tide of rubbish and filth in the town centre. It had some success, but the problem is unrelenting and fresh impetus is required. I look to the new council to carry on the good work and to bring Romford town centre up to the standard that it deserves if it is to continue to prosper.

There is a growing contrast between conditions within buildings and their external surroundings. I recently visited the social security offices in Romford and was most impressed by the high quality and comfort, by the well-furnished offices, the civilised surroundings awaiting visitors and the improved working conditions for staff. After my visit, I stepped outside the door and was appalled by the scene—refuse, dirt and degradation immediately outside the door of brand new offices. I should say that the rubbish had been there for months.

I welcome the introduction of the draft code of practice on litter and refuse by my right hon. Friends in the various Departments responsible because I believe that this scourge of modern life is now likely to be met by adequate measures. Public authorities are frequently among the worst offenders.

In Romford, it is a question of self-interest for people, especially traders, to endeavour to clean up their act. Romford has become a boom town in recent years, with growing developments of commercial and retail property. It attracts people from all over the area—from east London, Essex and even across the river in Kent. Romford has a wide range of shops to attract people, who can do all their shopping in one visit. However, shoppers will increasingly be put off because standards are not being maintained.

Romford now faces competition from other developments: a £350 million Lakeside development in Thurrock; Eastgate in Basildon; The Royals at Southend; and the £100 million Exchange development in nearby Ilford. All those developments are imaginative and modern, and will prove irresistible to shoppers. Business will be lost to Romford unless we tackle the problem adequately, and ensure that our standards are as high as those anywhere else. Therefore, taking the required action is simply a matter of survival for the town's commercial livelihood. I shall be pleased to play an active part in supporting their efforts.

Many other towns suffer from the same blemish. I welcome the fact that the code tackles the problem of public authorities which allow their land to become an eyesore. I wish the code all success. I hope that it will receive prominence and will be put into effect forcefully, and as quickly as possible.

I have observed that, although many Conservative-controlled London boroughs have given priority to the question of the environment—for example, my former London borough home, Bromley, which was the first with its clean and green campaign—some Labour-controlled inner-city authorities, despite high expenditure, give low priority to street cleaning. I can only conclude that that is a deliberate party-political policy. By creating squalid conditions for their people, they are encouraging the sense of underclass which underpins their political support.

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): That allegation needs to be refuted. I cannot speak for any particular inner London borough, but I remind the hon. Member that Sheffield, a Labour authority, is the recycling city of the United Kingdom. It is leading in this activity.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory): With Government help.

Mr. Griffiths: I am not denying that. Cardiff, again a Labour authority, is taking a similar position in Wales. It does not become the hon. Member, in a debate such as this, to pin a party-political label on the good and the bad. He will find both good and bad Labour and Conservative councils.

Mr. Neubert: I am open to reports that other cities under Labour control have done better, but I can judge only as I find. Being a Member of Parliament for a London constituency and working in London, I observe the street scene in London and can only notice the relative differences between Conservative and Labour authorities there. In London, the worst examples are Labour authorities. This cannot be for lack of money. It is simply that they have put a low priority on this activity. It is open to them to give it a higher priority if they wish to refute my allegation. I realise it was a serious and provocative allegation in what would otherwise be an all-party debate, but it was necessary to make it because it is simply not necessary for such squalor to continue in our inner cities. Living in the heart of one of our modern cities does not mean that people should have to endure the living conditions forced on them when local authorities do not carry out their duties.

Help is at hand. I have here a booklet containing a code of practice that will make it possible for lack of implementation of such policies to be challenged by individuals. An aggrieved citizen will be able to seek a litter abatement order and, given the increasing interest in the environment, I am sure that there will be no lack of aggrieved citizens ready to act. The code of practice lays down definitions of litter and will be innovative in two ways. First, it will define standards of cleanliness achievable in different types of locations—an important part of my motion. People who live in towns should not have to suffer a less attractive environment than people in the country or in more rural areas. The code sets a common universal standard for Britain as a whole.

Secondly, the code is concerned not with having a regular rota of cleaning and with how frequently streets are cleaned, but with the achievement of a level of cleanliness. In other words, if a street does not need to be

[Mr. Neubert]

cleaned so often, it should not be. Attention will be targeted on those streets that need continuous sweeping or cleaning. Expressed in its simplest terms, the code of practice says, "If it's not dirty, don't clean it." As I have explained, that is not the problem at the moment. I look to the code of practice, to which no doubt my hon. Friend the Minister will refer, for some help in dealing with the major problems of graffiti, litter and refuse in our streets.

I shall pass quickly over how to reduce noise levels because the House recently had an opportunity to discuss this matter. However, my experience in politics and public life has shown me that noise is of utmost importance. I support the aims of the Noise Abatement Society. I wish success to anybody who aims at reducing noise.

Complementary to clearing our streets of litter and refuse is efficient waste management and recycling of material resources. The throwaway society has become a contemporary cliché, but people are now realising the folly of such a policy. Modern ways of over-packaging and over-presenting products cause people to be angry because not only is this wasteful, but it causes extra litter. Fast-food outlets are very much in sight here because people realise that fast-food containers threaten rain forests—it is as serious as that.

Efficient waste management is coming very much to the fore. I am glad to say that some local authorities—the hon. Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths) may have some sterling examples—are active in this. He mentioned Sheffield, but I shall mention three Conservative authorities. East Sussex has developed a solid fuel that is waste derived, and that will greatly benefit the environment. It recycles six different products, and is very much to the fore in these matters. Test Valley has recently appointed a recycling officer and the money saved by recycling is going back to the community. That incentive should be encouraged. Devon county council has been designated a recycling county and it now recycles 10,000 tonnes of waste a year, which is about 2·5 per cent. of its total waste every year.

The Government have set the demanding target that, by the year 2000, 50 per cent. of recyclable household waste should be recycled. I shall be interested to hear how they are planning to achieve that. We must appreciate that these resources are valuable. For example, water, unmetered and unlimited at the tap, is a precious natural resource that should not be profligately used, as it has been, without thought for the future.

Mr. James Arbuthnot (Wanstead and Woodford): My hon. Friend spoke of the code of practice and mentioned that it includes graffiti. I rushed out to get a copy of it. One of the things that concerns me in my constituency is that there is far too much graffiti, but I am not sure that the code of practice deals with graffiti in as much detail as I would like. I have leafed through the White Paper as carefully as I can, but I am not sure of the effect that it will have on graffiti. This is one of the most important issues in the environment of Wanstead and Woodford and probably in the constituency of my hon. Friend. Will he comment on it?

Mr. Neubert: My hon. Friend is right to highlight the need to remove graffiti from buildings. I, too, did not find much promise in the code of a solution to this problem, but I have no doubt that my hon. Friend th heard what my hon. Friend has said and w it later. I commend London Transport f prosecution of the mindless vandals wh appearance of so much of its rolli spray-painted graffiti. The public should every effort to remove this anti-social beh

Mr. Peter Bottomley (Eltham): Do no recent prosecutions of people going in for destructive painting of underground trains show that small groups of people manage t of the landscape? The vast majority of involved and they disapprove, and they authorities to police the underground by sa notice people spraying graffiti so that th caught before they make it look as t widespread habit.

Mr. Neubert: Those are salutary words that I have the support of the House whe must look to the public to support the authorities are taking because this is a soc is a matter for peer groups. Parents and inculcate in children a concern for the en consideration for others. Some youngster graffiti attractive, and this must be rigoro

To conclude my list of items for action, my head above the level of the gutter and and talk about that part of our enviro represented by our stately homes and garde heritage is part of our life. With increas mobility, people are able to enjoy a heritag to this country.

The National Trust has been one remarkable success stories of the post-w millions of people have access to propert longer exclusively accessible to the we aristocracy. I am happy to say that I am a the National Trust. I very much support a preserve our heritage.

The Historic Houses Association, unde of the Earl of Shelburne, covers properties by no fewer than 11 million people a yea are owned and maintained by individua expense. The responsibility for looking af ruinous. Apart from natural disasters, su storms and those that we suffered earlier th repair and maintenance can be extren particularly because of the need to u materials and techniques. Some of the ow the costs too hard to bear; they have be resources. During the past 10 years, 250 been sold. That is no surprise, but it is a m In the main, those properties will probab open to the public, or even be used as resid purpose they were designed and built.

Some owners have established mai They provide the owners with no direct The funds have been established to finance repair and to improve visitor facilities. N income from the funds is taxed at 35 per ce Houses Association believes that to be a maintenance of this part of our heritag

owners sell works of art for this purpose, they have to pay the full capital gains tax. Value added tax also has to be paid on repair and maintenance work.

A country confident of itself and concerned to maintain its heritage should be alarmed about such a trend and ought to seek to arrest it. Other countries make major tax concessions for this purpose. Although this may not be a popular theme on Conservative Benches, given our unique heritage I believe that the Government ought to be prepared to do more to help the owners of these properties. The Government may believe that the owners ought to look after them, but that is unrealistic. The owners recognise the public value their houses and believe that the Government ought to make a contribution towards their upkeep. A balance has to be struck. The Government have provided help in the past, but there is scope for further Government help. As prosperity increases, more and more people will want to visit these houses.

There are many other aspects of the environment to which I could draw the attention of the House. The Government's role ought to be limited to implementing the minimum amount of regulation. They should also encourage the education of young people about the importance of the environment. Environmental policy is a subject in the new national curriculum. Like so much else, however, it comes back to the individual. It starts in the home and continues in school. Parents and teachers need to work in partnership to bring about greater awareness of the need not to foul our own nest but to maintain a pleasant, attractive and healthy environment.

There may be a need for even stricter regulation. There is a hint of autocracy in Singapore. I should not be averse to the introduction of a regulation that requires property owners to be responsible for the appearance of their property and even for the pavement in front of it. It is all a question of discipline and good order. Evidence of health hazards has shocked us into taking action. They have made us more aware of the importance of the environment. It is not just a question, however, of safety or health considerations, or even of legal requirements. An attractive, well-ordered and tidy environment is part of our birthright and part of our responsibility as members of the community. We should all endeavour to play our full part.

10.14 am

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): I congratulate the hon. Member for Romford (Mr. Neubert) on his good luck in winning first place in the ballot and even more on his choice of subject. I thank him for giving the House this opportunity to debate the wide range of issues that he included, helpfully, in his motion. My hon. Friends and I were fascinated to hear of his experience when travelling from what he thought was the civilised west to the less civilised east but finding standards in Singapore which, constrasted with what he found when he returned to Heathrow, were much higher, thus leading to his belief that the balance was in favour of the east.

What interests my hon. Friends and I is that this is not just a matter of hemispheres, of east versus west, or of the east compared with the west. It just so happens that what the hon. Gentleman left in the east was a socialist society and that he returned to a conservative society when he landed at Heathrow. Therefore, we welcome his example. We understand the problems that he faces in Romford. The poll tax and the other policies and philosophies that he so ardently supports have led to much of the dirt, muck and mire that we see in our streets, because local authorities have had either to contract out their cleansing services or to cut them. We are most grateful to the hon. Gentleman. He has told us about two experiences that we shall certainly note and quote on future occasions. I assure him that he will get full attribution when we do so.

I shall concentrate on the gulf between declared Government attitudes on green issues and Government decisions, and I shall give three examples from my experience. The first is a general point; the others are specific. They demonstrate that an important change is taking place because of the loss of control over the local environment by the local community and its switch to central Government. Increasingly, ministerial administrative diktat, without reference to the House of Commons, can overrule the rights of the public, local control and local environmental considerations.

The first general change was made by the right hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Ridley). Among a series of disastrous decisions—one of which is the abomination of a tower that one has to look at across the Thames—he made a very important administrative decision that did not need the approval of the House of Commons. He said that, in future, the presumption in planning applications would be switched in favour of the developer, the applicant. We live under a regime where it is presumed that land is suitable to be developed, unless those who oppose the development can prove that there is good reason why it would not take place.

That change did not attract the attention that it deserved. It massively switched the balance of advantage from the local community and those who protect the environment to profit-seeking, often parasitic, developers who have only one interest—to make a quick buck and then to withdraw from the area, leaving local people to live with the consequences of their greed.

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams): The presumption is in the process of being changed. The right hon. Gentleman is therefore no longer correct, because an application must be considered according to the current structure plan and local plan. Under a current local plan, there will no longer be a presumption in favour of building, but if the proposal is outside the local plan the presumption will be against all development.

Mr. Williams: I shall give an example of a Minister doing the opposite under a local plan. I am glad to receive the hon. Gentleman's endorsement of the sanctity of the local plan. The hon. Gentleman says that the system will change. I am delighted to hear it, but why is it not changing now? Such a change needs not legislation but a Minister to issue guidance, and the emphasis would be switched back to the local community. If the Government believe that a change is necessary in a week's time, it is necessary now. I hope that it will be announced that as from today the balance has been restored to the local community. Councils are increasingly reluctant to refuse marginal planning applications. They fear that, because of the prejudgment of the Department, appeals will go against them and they will have to pay the applicant's costs for counsel, architects and so on.

That change weakened the protective function of local authorities and was an important alteration to the

[Mr. Williams]

framework. If the Government will now admit that it was a mistake, I should be the first to applaud that admission and to welcome an urgent change in the guidance given to local authorities.

In many ways, the second problem is far more important constitutionally. Ministers exercise an Executive function and, because of their role in Departments, a quasi-judicial function. The Secretaries of State for the Environment, for Scotland and for Wales make decisions on planning applications.

Let me demonstrate a new and invidous situation that is dangerous constitutionally. It cannot be challanged in the courts or it would have been, but it has shades of Crichel Down and it worries me when I see this clear confusion of functions within Departments. West Glamorgan health authority had about 12 acres of land, much of which was being used for allotments. The Welsh Office issued a circular stating that health authorities had to dispose of any land surplus to their requirements at the best possible realisable value. In other words, they had to get the best added value. The same circular said that this would normally mean applying for planning consent for the land. If it was refused, they were told to appeal to the Welsh Office, which had issued the circular telling them to sell the land. What chance did my constituents have? Allotment holders, who had been there many years, waged a campaign on behalf of the whole community to keep this green wedge in the heart of a built-up section of Swansea. All the residents in the area, the local authorities, the city and the county opposed it. To their credit, the protests continued for a long time, but—surprise, surprise—eventually the health authority, in keeping with the circular, appealed to the Welsh Office.

It does not take much imagination for hon. Members to guess the outcome of the appeal. But where is the quasi-judicial independence? At some time, every hon. Member present has written to a Minister about planning and has received a reply saying, "I note the points that you make, but I cannot comment on them because in the event of an appeal I exercise a quasi-judicial role." We all know that it is the constitutional reality, but that independence is distorted by the Department telling authorities not only to sell land but to apply for planning consent and to appeal to the same impartial Minister if it is refused.

Hon. Members will gather that I do not regard the Welsh Office as the most competent administrative centre in Whitehall. In England, as far as I can gather—the Minister's office was most helpful in trying to get information for me at short notice—there has been one instance of an education authority being told that it must sell land that had been preserved for school use. That had never happened in Wales, but within days of taking office the Secretary of State for Wales issued such a directive to West Glamorgan county council. It was opposed by local residents, even local Conservative councillors, the county and the city, and petitions were handed in. The Secretary of State admitted in a parliamentary answer that he had received only one representation in favour of it, two and a half years ago, from a developer outside Swansea. The then Secretary of State wisely sat on it for two and a half years. In a letter, the developer said that the land was needed for development and to create building jobs in Swansea.

In the two and a half years since that
made—this touches on the point of the h
South Hams (Mr. Steen)—more than 40
have been released on planning consent i
Most of them are still empty—so much
—because developers are unable to go
released plots. The Land Authority for
said that more plots are not needed
Swansea.

Almost two years after the initial appl
plan was approved in April. In that pl
marked clearly for future school developn
who had originally applied for use of th
did not appeal against the local plan. Give
Office considered that the site shoul
residential rather than school developmen
any such suggestion during the consultati
local plan. At the very time when there c
proper inquiry and democratic discussio
plan and the allocation of the land, the
the developer kept their heads down and

In July, just three months after the
approved, the Welsh Office turned rou
directive to the West Glamorgan educat
sell the six acres. The Welsh Office has im
of 22 December on the education autho
the Welsh Office will enforce its decision

The local authority, however, will
application for the residential use of the
marked in the local plan for school use
desperately needed. It will do so on the
plan approved and lodged with the Wels
Subsequently, an appeal will be made to
and the Secretary of State will put on hi
that respect his need is not as great as mi
of State, having told the local education a
land must be sold, will then purport to m
judicial decision on the planning ap
application does not command the sup
people; only one supporting representatio
and it comes from outside the area. The
is that the Secretary of State is not just ju
prosecutor, too. In fact, in terms of Swan
the villain, the prosecutor and judge an
exactly popular, as I am sure hon.
understand.

When the hon. Member for Romfor
was at the Ministry of Defence I had ma
helpful discussions with him, but I regre
MOD is also disposed to use administ
override local opinion. The House will
assume that Swansea is suffering fro
complex, but a recent decision of the M
serious environmental impact on the are

We were all astonished at the recent pr
a £100 million refit of a nuclear subm
suddenly decommissioned. However, S
had a new status conferred on it by t
decided that that city is to have a Z-ber
nuclear submarine. No chance was giv
discussion of that decision; the Ministry j
To be fair, that does not mean that the
for the Armed Forces reached his
reference to outside advice. He put tha
committee. That nameless, faceless co
mous for security reasons—consists

Seventeen members are either former military staff, former MOD staff or existing MOD officials. The odds are slightly in the Minister's favour, particularly as I gather that the other half dozen committee members are almost certainly representatives from the nuclear industry.

Public opinion appears not to count and the only check on the MOD decision is a committee appointed by the Minister, largely staffed by his men. The MOD has been challenged about that, but it states that it always follows its advice. That is hardly surprising given that the advisory committee is made up of the Minister's own men. They consider the proposition and it is not subject to any democratic appeal or meaningful representation.

My hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) and I welcomed a deputation who came up from Swansea with a petition about the decision. The Minister refused to see them, so they went with us to the MOD where we intended to hand in the petition. At the MOD the Minister had the cheek to send down a message to say that he would see the two hon. Members, but not the people who brought the petition. Not surprisingly we told him that we could do without that type of meeting.

Swansea docks are in the heart of the community and they represent the dividing line between the two Swansea constituencies. A nuclear reactor is now to be stationed in those docks. One does not want to be theatrical about it, but it is hard not to be when the MOD is decommissioning its nuclear submarines as fast as it can. Given that it wrote off overnight a £100 million refit because of faults with the reactor, one is left with the suspicion that something must be wrong.

What rights do we have in Swansea to oppose the MOD decision? Absolutely none. All that we get are assurances from the Minister of State for the Armed Forces that, in his opinion, the reactor is safe. If it is that safe, he should have it in his constituency. The city council, the county council, the citizens of Swansea and my hon. Friend and I do not want it, but the Z-berth will be imposed on us. The Government are willing to write off £100 million, but what assurances are we given about protecting the environment? We have been told that there will be a 550 m security zone.

Mr. Arbuthnot: My hon. Friend the Member for Romford (Mr. Neubert) will not make the point for himself, but I assure the right hon. Gentleman that Romford is not a suitable place to berth nuclear submarines.

Mr. Williams: I would not want the nuclear submarine to get lost in the sea of rubbish which it would encounter if it tried to go down Romford high street. The hon. Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Arbuthnot) was gallantly trying to protect his hon. Friend, but he had no need to because I was not attacking him. I was attacking the present Minister of State for the Armed Forces.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The present Minister of State for the Armed Forces also has a landlocked constituency, so the same argument applies.

Mr. Williams: If the Minister tried for either of the Swansea constituencies, he would not be elected. Perhaps he can afford to be so insensitive about the issue because his constituency is not affected. As a former Parliamentary Private Secretary to an ex-Prime Minister, the Minister knows his way round Whitehall and he should understand the way in which the system works. I was not attacking the hon. Member for Romford, who gave me the opportunity to make this speech.

I gave three examples: of a hospital site, of a school site and of a decision about a nuclear submarine berth. I have tried to show that Ministers may make the right sounds on environmental matters, but that their actions and decisions belie their green pretensions.

10.40 am

Mr. Peter Bottomley (Eltham): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Romford (Mr. Neubert) for giving the House the chance to discuss this important subject. No one but he could do justice to the whole range of issues, and I congratulate him on the way in which he canvassed the various subjects to which other hon. Members will want to return. Some hon. Members have long-term interests in some of the subjects. My hon. Friend the Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen)—I am pleased to see that he has flown in—has been dealing with derelict land for many years. He shows that continuity of interest which is so important, and the House is grateful that he has been able to adjust his diary to be here today.

The right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) has given us some interesting ideas. Epsom and Ewell is not a nuclear-free zone, but one must remember that submarines tend to go by water and not by land. No one could accuse Conservative Ministers of a NIMBY syndrome on such issues. The House will remember that Lord Pym, when he was a Member of this House, agreed to medium-range missiles being based in his own constituency. Such toughness has led to some of the changes in eastern Europe to which my hon. Friend the Member for Romford referred.

It is only when we allow the media to see what is happening in different countries that we discover what an environmental disaster state socialism has been. It has also been an economic disaster for the people and a military disaster.

I want to raise some important environmental issues in my own constituency of Eltham. That area is well known to my hon. Friend the Member for Romford because, early in his 40 years of distinguished service to the community, he was the youngest mayor of Bromley. At that time he would occasionally have driven into London through my constituency and, for all I know, he may still go through it on his way to east London.

He will have noticed that there has been an environmental improvement for 21,000 of my constituents as a result of the building of the Rochester way relief road. I am grateful to the Rees Jeffries Road Fund for funding an appraisal of the operational, environmental and economic impact of that important road. As many hon. Members will know, the A2 goes through the middle of my constituency, which lies in the southern part of the borough of Greenwich. The road has had traffic jams since 1381 when Wat Tyler came up from Canterbury with his band of friends. He was held up at the Well Hall roundabout for four hours and had to camp overnight on Blackheath so that the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) could give an annual address on the back of a flat-top lorry.

It is worth noting that the missing three miles of road between Falconwood to the east and the Blackwall tunnel approach to the west had been a planning disgrace, an

[Mr. Peter Bottomley]

environmental disgrace and a transport disgrace. For 40 years, there had been a gap and the reason was that, traditionally, my constituency has been a marginal seat.

It was felt that building a necessary bit of road might swing the votes of 200 people, which could decide whether there was a Tory or a Labour Member of Parliament. That in turn could decide whether there was a Tory or Labour Government and that could decide whether we made progress in the European Community, depending on which side of the fence the Labour party was sitting in a particular year when an election might take place. The missing road was being held hostage for the political fortunes of the country.

Fortunately, there were some local people who were willing to fight. In 1974, when I was first adopted as a prospective parliamentary candidate, I began to go for walks with mothers with prams along the Rochester way at 5 pm on a Friday. We had a police escort and, of course, if the police had told us not to do it, we would not have done it. We were a law-abiding community group and, as a Conservative Member, I would not dream of getting involved in some of the ludicrous arguments that we noticed this morning on television when we heard the results of the Paisley by-elections. The Labour party and the Scottish National party were discussing whether to break the law.

We believe that the law should be obeyed and we are grateful that the present leader of the Opposition agrees. I wish that he would say so to Councillor MacParland, a Labour councillor on Greenwich council, who is the prime organiser of the Greenwich campaign against the poll tax. Let us begin to see some steel and determination from the Labour leader even if he is at risk of being replaced by the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith).

From 1974 to 1978, we had great difficulty with the local council, which was Labour controlled. However, I agree with other hon. Members that we should be as non-partisan as possible today. I give the council its political label for those who will read the report of the debate later. It was only in 1978 that Greenwich council realised that the people of Eltham were keen to have the road. The council needed a fig leaf to cover its change of policy. It asked the Greater London council to carry out an assessment of the environmental impact of a new road and to see what damage the old road was doing.

The three-mile stretch of poor road was adversely affecting 25,000 people. The economic analysis showed that the new road would not quite pay in cost-benefit terms, but the reason for building it was the environmental improvement for local people. At Deansfield school, on the old road, children were exposed not only to the traffic dangers of 42,000 vehicles a day going past, but to the lead, to the fumes, to the smog, to the smoke and to all the poisons that are part of the cost of our present motor engine.

I look forward to two developments. In the long term, I look forward to the development of the electric engine for shorter journeys of up to about 50 miles. Being able to use cars that are pollutant-free as they go through the areas in which people live will be an important development.

In the shorter term, I hope that many more people will switch to lead-free fuel. It is good that my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley) helped to push up the sales of lead-free petrol from less than 1 or 2 per cent. to 31 or 32 per cent. That was a great achievement, but we must realise that almost three times as many people could use lead-free fuel.

I have recently disposed of a 13-year-old Ford Fiesta. The adjustment to lead-free fuel took two minutes at Ryan's Van Hire of Romford. I dropped in without an appointment for 10 minutes on the way to opening a lead-free fuel pump.

Mr. Irvine Patnick (Sheffield, Hallam): By appointment?

Mr. Bottomley: I had an appointment to attend the opening. That old car could use lead-free fuel three times out of four. If that Ford could do so, many other cars, especially new cars, could do so as well. I hope that, when people take their cars in for winter servicing, they will check with the garage, with the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders, which has a help line, with the Royal Automobile Club, with the Automobile Association or with the Department of Transport. They will then find out whether they are wasting 10p a gallon and whether they are contributing to throwing into the air tonnes of unnecessary lead, which falls on our faces, is breathed in, falls on our food and is a potential development hazard, especially to children.

Last night I was privileged to give the St. Andrews lecture at Holy Trinity church in Barnes. I discussed the idea that we could do a great deal more to improve the environment if we halved the distance between our homes and our places of work. That may not be possible for all Members of Parliament but, in time, people who travel for an hour or so by train or car to get to work and back ought to be able to change their jobs or their homes. People would spend less on train fares, cars and petrol and their well-being would be greatly enhanced. They could probably double or treble the amount of spare time that they enjoyed. I think that it is that kind of well-being that my hon. Friend the Member for Romford was anxious to promote in initiating this debate.

We should accept the need for mobility, for improvements in public transport and for some capital investment in public transport, not all of which can be underground. I welcome the large increase in investment in public transport, which has come about largely because of the change in people's travelling habits in and around London.

Between 1982 and 1987—a period of unparalleled growth and economic prosperity—the number of people commuting to London by car each day fell from 190,000 to 160,000. That fall should have been noted and welcomed by the environmental campaigning groups, but either they did not know of or they chose not to notice the information being put out by the Department of Transport during my time there.

The number of people commuting by rail increased by 20 per cent. during the same period, and that led to reinvestment and to the further improvement of the service, although it also caused overcrowding. The same applied to London Underground which unfortunately has not yet reached the London borough of Greenwich. We hope that the link to the east of London will come through the Greenwich peninsula, even though that will not directly help my constituents. I hope that massive capita

investment will continue, especially as the number of journeys on London Underground each day increased by 70 per cent. during the five-year period to which I referred. Again, that development was not noted or welcomed by Transport 2000 or Friends of the Earth.

The Rochester way relief road was built because local people wanted it. I cannot say the same about the approach road to the east London river crossing. I think that I was the first person to point out, in 1983, that an approach road through Eltham would only damage local people.

The bridge itself may or may not be necessary to those north of the river. I know that Newham is strongly in favour of the bridge and of the construction of a decent road, as well as a rail link, to connect Newham to the channel ports and the rest of Europe. I pay tribute to the way in which Labour Members who represent Newham have argued in favour of that opportunity for economic development. But I want them to know that in Eltham the approach road will do only damage. There is no gain to Eltham. There may be some gain to Thamesmead, which needs jobs and needs to be linked in as far as possible. But in Eltham the approach road would be an environmental disaster, not least because of its potential effect on Oxleas woods. Before I became a Transport Minister, I was a leading member of the campaign to avoid or minimise the damage. While I was a Minister, I continued to convey the representations that I received, although Ministers are not allowed to take decisions about their own constituencies —a necessary and wise protection against corruption and special dealing.

Since I left the Department, I have been able once more to say openly what my constituents have been saying and what I was saying before. I object strongly to the suggestion by some environmental campaign groups that there has been a U-turn in my behaviour. I ask them to stop spreading lies because it does not help.

The person in the best position to help secure protection for Oxleas woods and Eltham is me. I have focused on a matter with which Greenwich council has failed to deal. Incidentally, I should like to tell the House of a coincidence. Greenwich council cut off funding to the objectors at the second inquiry into the bridge. The objectors came to me. I took up the matter with Greenwich council, which decided to spend £67,000 on representations. The announcement was made by Councillor John Austin Walker, who happens to be the prospective Labour candidate standing against the hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright) and by Councillor Clive Efford, who happens to be the prospective Labour candidate standing against me in Eltham. If we are to take a bipartisan approach to trying to reduce the impact on the woods, the local Labour group had better stop giving the impression that it is spending £67,000 of local residents' money to help its candidates at the forthcoming election.

Mr. Alan Williams: One interpretation is that the prospective candidates will be able to do what the sitting Member of Parliament has failed to do.

Mr. Bottomley: It is true that, as councillors, they can divert £67,000 of local residents' money for purposes that they choose.

There is a second coincidence. When Greenwich council last appointed members to the district health authority, it did not just pick Councillor John Austin Walker, the prospective Labour candidate for Woolwich, and Councillor Clive Efford, the prospective Labour candidate for Eltham; it appointed Mr. Nick Raynsford, the prospective Labour candidate for Greenwich. If there is one reason for changing the system of appointments to health authorities, it is Greenwich council's behaviour.

In 1982, Greenwich council decided to increase the rate burden on local residents by 59 per cent. in one year. That is the equivalent of a property revaluation of 50 per cent. under the old system, and we saw what damage that did in Scotland.

If we want to protect and improve our environment, we had better start working together. People had better not fall into Greenwich council's habit of turning everything into a party-political issue. The council changed its mind two or three times on the Rochester way relief road and I expect they will do the same with the approach road.

Part of the £67,000 that Greenwich used could better have been spent on an independent analysis of whether the slip roads off the approach road to the east London river crossing—at the Shooters hill interchange—could be dropped. If those slip roads are not needed, the money can be used to cover over the road as it cuts through the woods. If, as was decided at the first inquiry, it is necessary for the road to go through the woods to serve those north of the river—the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) may have a view on that—we ought to cover it over. That will be decided following a decision on whether the slip roads are needed. Department of Transport engineers believe that they are necessary. I ask Greenwich council to switch some of its resources to an independent assessment of whether those slip roads can be dropped.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I did not intervene when the hon. Gentleman was complaining about the appointment of Greenwich councillors, although I could have done, as the Government made great play of appointing the chairmen of the regional health authorities and of ensuring that they were all good loyal Conservatives. That sort of think tends to happen. Having said that, I entirely support the hon. Gentleman's campaign to avoid the destruction or deterioration of Oxleas wood—a very historic part of London.

Mr. Bottomley: In defence of regional health authority chairmen, I should point to the record of the chairman of South-East Thames regional health authority. I am having a dispute with him because of the authority's ludicrous decision to spend £50 million on moving its neuroscience department from Shooters hill to Denmark hill. There will be no economic gain from the move, which is merely intended to tie in neuroscience with psychiatry. However much that may please my hon. Friend the Member for Dulwich (Mr. Bowden), it is a ludicrous waste of resources.

To the best of my knowledge and belief, however, the chairman of the regional health authority has no publicly expressed politics. He was a distinguished permanent secretary. He gives much of his time to voluntary groups. He has done much to promote mobility for the disabled and he chairs the authority in a distinctive and distinguished way.

Mr. Banks: He is a Tory.

Mr. Bottomley: I do not think that he is a Tory at all. I give a public warning that that £50 million is not available and will not be spent to maintain hospital services in the south and the east of the borough of Greenwich.

I am grateful to the hon. Member for Newham, North-West. He confirms that, even though people north of the river are desperate to have the bridge and a road to link to the bridge to bring Newham into the road network, there is support north of the river to minimise the impact on Oxleas woods. I hope that Newham would be willing to contribute with Greenwich to the assessment of the slip roads.

Normally, covering a road by constructing a tunnel would treble the cost of a road. I suspect that, in the case of Oxleas woods, only an extra £10 million or £12 million would be necessary to cover the road if the slip roads are not necessary. If Greenwich council, with Newham's help, carried out a study which confirmed that the slip roads were necessary, my case would become more difficult to argue. However, so far we do not have any information.

I was shocked and horrified to discover that Greenwich has spent so much money in so many ways, but it has not assessed the slip roads. If we deal with the specifics, we will provide arguments that lead to progress. That is what happened with the Rochester way relief road.

I want to consider briefly the conclusions of the independent study on the effects of the Rochester way relief road. As I have said, the road was built for the benefit of local people. I believe that it is the only major trunk road to be opened in inner London, within the old London county council area, in the past 10 years or [illegible] confirms what I used to say at the Department of Transport—that roads are built only if there are significant advantages for local people. I cannot say that about the approach road to the east London river crossing, but in general that is true.

The conclusion of the independent study entitled "An appraisal of the operational, environmental and economic impacts of the Rochester way relief road" includes the fact that most of the objectives set down in advance were realised in practice. It is interesting that the traffic model did not predict the significant reduction in traffic on Shooters hill road. That unexpected reduction in traffic may influence whether the slip roads are needed in Oxleas woods for the link to the road to the east London river crossing.

The study states that the impact on the urban landscape has been achieved at the cost of

"some disruption during construction and some considerable sacrifice in terms of lost homes and businesses and some loss of open space. Nevertheless, it has been designed and built in such a way that very little additional severance has been created either physically or visually."

In South-east London, far too many people suffer from the effects of traffic and many of us are part of the problem. One of my constituents asked me whether he could help in the campaign about the impact of the road on Oxleas woods. I told him that he could and that he should tell me how many cars were in his road at night and how many in the middle of the day. I was told that nearly all the cars moved. We are all part of the problem and we need to find ways of reducing our impact on the environment.

Part of the solution is to park and ride. Preferably, people should park as far outside London as possible instead of driving in and crowding the roads. It would be far better to allow British Rail to carry people as long distance as possible. Part of the impact of t improvements to the railway station and to the roads Eltham has been that the commuters' cars are bei parked all day in unsuitable residential roads.

I hope that in the various transport Bills that are to introduced this Session we can find ways to enable lo authorities to say that, apart from residents, no outsi should be able to park on a residential road near a stati for longer than three hours. That would allow plenty time for shopping and it would be good for local tra However, it would stop someone coming in selfishly 7.30 am and avoiding the station car park. It would st that person leaving his car in that residential road all d thus making life miserable for local people who have drive around and then find it difficult to stop to shop trade.

An associated problem is that, unfortunately, there vandals and delinquents around. Eltham station car p is half empty partly because people can park free—it is f parking to them, but it has an environmental cost to oth —in nearby streets and partly because of car break-in shall be asking British Transport police and Metropolitan police to set up a study group w Greenwich council with a plan for action to cut by t thirds within 12 months the number of break-ins in Eltham station car park.

We should also spend more time dealing with d dealers. Whether they peddle hard drugs or soft, t generate crime on an almost unbelievable scale. One d dealer may have only 20 clients, each of whom may sp £200 a week on his habit. The client will not earn t money, he will have to take about £2,000 worth of go to the people who handle drugs to get his £200. To £2,000 worth of goods a week, he will probably have to £40,000 worth of damage. If we multiply that £40,00 week of damage caused by people trying to fund t habits, we are talking about more than £750,000 damage to the community from one drugs dealer.

Anyone in Eltham who notices drug dealing or u should contact the police. That is the way to cut crime to have confidence in the station car park. It is one wa improving the environment, and it would also cut d the number of juveniles who are led into persis delinquency and to crime.

The Rochester way relief road study also revealed the traffic flows have been virtually as expected. No e traffic has been generated. Many of the arguments a the impact of building roads were wrong and many o arguments used by people like me have been right. possible to design roads to make local improvem without tempting people to throw away their rail se tickets and get back into their cars to commute.

If we can persist in those approaches, we can reduc number of people commuting long distances by However, I call for partnership. I got myself into hot w on the day of the launch of that good magazine *Express* when I said that I would not spend any mon help people to divert from rail to road. There wa uproar. The British Road Federation and others aske Prime Minister to sack me. Well, they were successful or three years after that, but not on that issue. environmentalist contacted me to say that I said the thing. I was told, "Don't worry about the car lobby, y doing the kind of thing that will help protect the environment." My shoulders are broad enough in

case, but we must persist to find the right way of improving the environment with the help of individuals, local councils and Government.

I hope that we can continue to work together and that we shall have a debate similar to this in two years in the hope that this debate will have helped to reinforce the good work that many are doing and woken up those who have been apathetic or ignorant about the problems.

11.6 am

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): This is the first specific debate on the environment under the new Administration. I congratulate the hon. Member for Romford (Mr. Neubert) on choosing this subject and on his motion. I agree with everything he said, but I have one reservation. I am not sure whether his interpretation of the phrase

"and calls on the Government, through the necessary minimum regulation",

would be my interpretation of that phrase. The difference between the rest of the House—and I generalise here—and my colleagues and I is that we believe that there is sometimes a need for local government and authorities to be specific and to intervene to prevent things.

In certain matters, relying on education, encouragement, exhortation and financial incentives is not enough. I am not saying that I assume that the hon. Member for Romford rejects intervention in all cases. I am sure that he does not. However, the difference between us is that there are times when he would say, "No, we must leave that to people's judgment, to education and to the market." I believe that environmental damage is too harmful and we must be far more interventionist in two ways: first, by using economic levers to encourage or discourage, and, secondly by occasionally saying, "I'm sorry, you're not allowed to do that."

I have also a reservation about this week's changes on the Government Benches. I told the right hon. Member for Huntingdon (Mr. Major) that, had I been a Tory, I would have voted for him not just because he is a south Londoner and out of geographical loyalty, but because, of all the people standing for leadership of the Tory party, he had a better understanding of the concerns of ordinary people and a greater commitment to social equality and justice. I look forward to that being regarded as a change in his Administration compared with the Administration of his predecessor.

However, there is one respect in which I already have a great reservation about the new Administration. I do not know whether the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment will retain his position after the reshuffle, so I do not impute to him any blame at all. In his pronouncements on the steps of No. 10 Downing street the new Prime Minister said that, among other things, he was committed to an improved quality of life for all our citizens. One word that has disappeared from the Prime Ministerial vocabulary since the handover is "environment". His predecessor's sudden interest in the environment has disappeared. In the priorities that the new Prime Minister has made clear, the word "environment" has not even once passed his lips.

In the Tory party's desperate need to shake off the political albatross of the poll tax—I do not blame the Tory party for wanting to get rid of that legacy of the previous regime—it has chosen somebody to go into the Department of the Environment, not for environmental reasons, but to deal with the poll tax. For the foreseeable future, the Department of the Environment is the Department for sorting out the poll tax. That is sad.

However hesitant and restricted he was, the previous Secretary of State for the Environment, now the chairman of the Conservative party, at least tried to paint Government policy green and make sure that green issues were more central in all Departments. He was having trouble with the Department of Transport and the Department of Energy, but he was trying. There is a danger that, because of the trouble of the poll tax and because the poll tax is the responsibility of the Department in charge of housing, local government finance and environmental issues, the Tories' green period may already be over. It will have been a very brief green period. That is to be regretted.

I fear that, as we approach the next election, concerns about the global environment—for example, global warming, harmful emissions or nuclear waste—will be further from the front of the new Administration's shop window as other, more domestic and short-term matters are put forward. I am not saying that somebody should not sort out the poll tax and get rid of it before the next election. Everybody seems to offer advice to the new Prime Minister and his Ministers. I join the Leader of the Opposition in offering advice to the Prime Minister. If he decided to abolish the poll tax rather than refine it, he would increase his and his hon. Friend's electoral prospects. Perhaps his hon. Friend the Member for Dulwich (Mr. Bowden), who has a thin majority, would benefit from the abolition of the poll tax like no other now that the former Prime Minister is resident in his constituency and exemplifies its unfairness for every resident of our borough.

Mr. Steen: There is nothing wrong with the community charge; it is just the amount. What we have to do is get the amount down and it will be a great success. I would not go down the hon. Gentleman's track.

Mr. Hughes: If the hon. Gentleman has survived so far and still has that belief, he is a less intelligent political diviner than I thought. I have not found many people who, even if the poll tax is lower, think that it is wonderful. The only gainers are the people who had a high rates bill and now have a low poll tax bill, and even they, in large measure, say that it is grossly unfair.

Mr. Steen *rose*——

Mr. Hughes: I shall not give way. Other hon. Members want to speak. It is not a debate about the poll tax.

Mr. Steen: The hon. Gentleman brought it up.

Mr. Hughes: Yes, I did, because it has suddenly appeared on the environmental agenda instead of proper environmental matters. It is in that context that I made the point.

The hon. Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley) and I have at least two things in common. First, we are both inner south-east London constituency Members, and, secondly, our constituencies are joined by the A2. It begins in my constituency as it sets off from the old borough of Southwark to London Bridge and on its way down to Dover.

I agree with many of the hon. Gentleman's comments. Transport is a crucial local environmental issue. I agree

[Mr. Hughes]

that to have improvements in the fuel that we use—for example, much more lead-free petrol—would be greatly beneficial. I agree also that if we could reduce journey distances between home and work, we would make a great advance in reducing the amount of wasted energy and unnecessarily consumed energy. In planning terms, I hope that we can build our new settlements near to existing rail lines and road networks and will not need to extend roads or build roads for new settlements in greenfield sites.

Like the hon. Member for Eltham, I am sympathetic to the idea of electric cars. We must remember that, although there is a benefit in the electric car, it still uses energy which must be provided by plugging in a recharging device. That is part of the use of renewable or non-renewable energy sources. It is not a simple equation: an electric car is not necessarily environmentally better than a car that runs on other types of fuel, although it has many attractions, not least that it does not pollute.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The hon. Gentleman is right. I suspect that we shall see greater improvements in the fuel efficiency of the initial primary generating plant and of energy transmission. As the hon. Gentleman rightly identified—I give him full credit for it—the key point is that, when those vehicles go through his constituency or through mine, they do not emit exhaust fumes. Carbon monoxide, lead, some of the nitrous oxides and the sulphur oxides, are the worst elements.

Electric cars will not have the boy-racer image. They will travel at a maximum speed of 30 mph in town. I hope that they will not tempt people to race off at the lights. Even with our present petrol engines, if we drive sanely we can use 20 per cent. less fuel and bring an instant benefit to our budgets.

Mr. Hughes: One of the consequences of the debate is that it is important for the consumer to know the balance between environmental interests and options. The hon. Gentleman referred to consumer education. Happily, according to opinion polls, young people say that environmental issues are their most important concern. It is important that people should be able to make proper choices and realise that they have to decide how they can best reduce emissions from vehicles and also make sure that they are consuming least energy. There is a balance, and it is to do with the size of cars, the size of engines and so on.

Mr. Arbuthnot: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hughes: I shall give way once more, but I wish other hon. Members to be able to speak.

Mr. Arbuthnot: One of the most curious cars that I have seen in the Members' car park is an orange and black taxi that belches smoke like no other car that I have ever seen. Is it right that it belongs to the hon. Gentleman? If so, how does he put his money where his mouth is?

Mr. Hughes: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman has asked that question. I do own a black and orange taxi. It is a diesel taxi, which is preferable to a petrol vehicle. The only problem with diesel engines, as the hon. Gentleman may be aware, is that for the first minute after they start from cold they produce a lot of smoke. I was fearful that it might be more environmentally harmful than that.

The Mail on Sunday carried out an environmental t on my taxi, the car of the former Secretary of State for Environment, the right hon. Member for Bath (I Patten), and the car of the hon. Member for Dagenh (Mr. Gould), the Labour party shadow spokesman. hon. Gentleman can check with *The Mail on Sunday* if wants—it was about a month ago. My taxi environmentally far better than either the customised of the right hon. Member for Bath or the car of the h Member for Dagenham. I accept that there is a sm problem. The taxi is at the garage at the moment hav that problem dealt with, but environmentally otherwise it is far more efficient. I can always give the h Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Arbuthno free ride in it, which will stop him using his car.

If we are really to improve the environment of peo in their locality, particularly in urban areas, we n reduce the number of vehicle journeys, the numbe vehicle journeys with only one person in a vehicle, number of vehicle journeys that can be made by o means, and, therefore, the number of environme disadvantages to people from the number of people use cars when we should encourage them to use o forms of transport.

The problem is not just that people park so that t vehicles cause an eyesore, but that they park pavements, which has environmental implications bec people fall over and local authorities have to spend m on repairing pavements. Horrendous congestion s down people's movement, and commuters travellin work from east London and south-east London bec frustrated because there are daily traffic jams and jou times are unpredictable.

We must be tough. One of my concerns when the hon. Member for Hertsmere (Mr. Parkinson) was a Department of Transport was that the transport lobby still winning arguments against the environmental lo I hope that matters will improve under the new Secr of State. Unless we reduce the number of cars in u districts and the number of car journeys, and increas amount of public and other investment in public trans by fare payers and others, we will not change that bal

I am sure that the Minister knows that there are places in the world where public transport works so that people never need to use private cars. I live Strasbourg for a while and the buses always came they were meant to. I could go to work on p transport. I lived in Brussels for a while when the r had just been built. I could rely on it for getting to on time.

Mr. Tony Banks: What about Paris?

Mr. Hughes: I have never lived in Paris, and I never been to Singapore——

Mr. Banks: The hon. Gentleman will.

Mr. Hughes: I hope that I shall not live in Singa although it may be better now that Mr. Lee Kuan Y no longer the Prime Minister. I hope that the Depar of the Environment will tackle the Departme Transport and make it an environmentally Department because as yet it has not been one.

I offer a suggestion that I know has to be passed o must be tough and license urban districts and i additional costs on people from outside the district i

want to use it. I see that the hon. Member for Eltham does not like my idea. He may have thought about it and rejected it. We must say, "We are sorry, but if you do not need to come in, you will have to pay to do so" in much the same way as the old Greater London council lorry ban operated.

We can take other steps. The Netherlands and other countries allow people to use bus lanes if their cars are full. We should consider such proposals. There are many ways to ensure that one minimises the number of vehicle journeys.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The hon. Gentleman has raised a serious point that I should have touched on. The problem with the prosperity that we have had in the past 10 years is that many people can afford money but not time. Any suggestion such as road pricing, which means that all one has to do is have a fistful of fivers to buy one's space, will lead to more traffic, not less, on the roads. Local authority workers and Members of Parliament will have their fares paid, small businesses will want concessions and big businesses will be able to afford the costs. The House should realise the loopiness of believing that road pricing will work; congestion is far better because those of us whose time is valuable will switch to public transport because it gives us a better option, not because it is cheaper.

Mr. Tony Banks *rose*——

Mr. Hughes: The hon. Member for Newham, North-West is itching to intervene, but he can have his chance in his speech. If he will excuse me, I shall not give way to him, as I normally do.

This is an important debate because urban environment and urban life are afflicted more by traffic and related issues than by anything else. Those issues include safety, accidents, injuries, deaths, damage to buildings, collisions and pollution. I do not want to launch, in extenso, into a debate about the options—road pricing is not the be all and end all. We must have a package, one part of which is to start investing in public transport. People will not move from private to public transport until public transport is of a quality that allows them to use it effectively. London's public transport is sometimes a nightmare, and so people will not change to using it but will prefer to make their journey more quickly in a private vehicle.

We should adopt policies such as encouraging people to use bicycles and not cars. My Liberal Democrat colleagues control the London borough of Sutton which is recognised as having led the way in public transport. Its staff are given an incentive for using bicycles, just as company employees have traditionally been given tax incentives to use company cars. We must end the tax incentive on company cars completely, not just partially. I accept that we need a package of policies, but we must ensure that combating the growth in individual motorised transport, which is the product of an affluent society, is one of our chief political targets.

The hon. Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen) has an interest in the issue of empty property and empty land, which constitute an environmental blight in urban districts. Increasingly, the Government have the tools to deal with empty land. During the past 10 years the Government have taken steps to deal with derelict land——

Mr. Steen: They were not sufficient.

Mr. Hughes: I agree that they were not sufficient and there needs to be a change in the way land is taxed if we are to deal with the problem efficiently. It is no good merely having a register and the Government making orders.

The Environmental Protection Act 1990 allows people to complain about litter where the culpable party is from the private rather than public sector. Therefore, if someone has litter on his land and is not doing anything about it, we can take action—I am grateful for that. That should be the case with empty property. If a private property owner is holding on to property and doing nothing, the Government should be able to intervene or give local authorities the power to intervene.

Various methods could be used to help to solve the problem. I am not a believer in expropriating other people's property, but I believe in saying that if someone is not using it and it is an eyesore, subject to the freehold remaining with the owner, control of that property should be taken away if its owner is not carrying out his duty to society. Empty property which is lying waste in inner cities could often be used for housing people.

I hope that the new team at the Department of the Environment and the Government will be tough in tackling the problem of empty land and property in urban districts because it is a nuisance and the cause of many problems, including environmental blight.

I ask the Minister, in a gentle and encouraging way, to seek to persuade his colleagues and the new Secretary of State to accede to the following, often repeated and uniquely London request. London is the only part of Britain prohibited by law from having parish and community councils. I end my speech where the hon. Member for Romford began: one of the best ways for people to influence their local environment is by coming together in a recognised forum which has status to discuss truly local matters, such as how to clean up the parks, rivers and ponds or where to put street lights and seating. Why is it that in London there can be no proper forum for such discussions, whereas in every other part of the country—England, Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland —people can have a local parish or community council to deal with such issues?

I hope that the new team at the Department of the Environment will seriously consider legislation. I was the last person to present relevant provisions to the House in the previous Session in the form of the London Local Government Bill, which was printed, and has been approved by the relevant parish and local authority organisations. It has been presented before by other colleagues and parties. I hope that the Government will seriously consider legislation because people are most effective in campaigning about the environment on their own doorstep where they know exactly how they are affected.

Today's debate is about the local environment. Global and local environments are interrelated, but most people feel that they can affect most the local environment. If we encourage them to do that, we shall at the same time encourage them to act to help to save the global environment. I hope that the Government will give a positive response to the request that we should give people such encouragement.

11.28 am

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams): I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Romford (Mr. Neubert) for providing us with an opportunity to debate such a far-reaching and widely-couched motion. It is the sort of widespread, blanket environmental discussion that this House does not have often enough. It is a pity that some Opposition Members have spoken exclusively about road safety to the exclusion of the issues of the wider environment. The House debated road safety only a fortnight ago, and some of the matters raised by Opposition Members this morning could have been conveniently fitted into that debate. Indeed, their speeches would have been more appropriate to that debate than to this far wider debate about people and their local environment—which, as we would expect, my hon. Friend has couched in broad terms.

Unfortunately, but understandably, the majority of hon. Members in the Chamber today are from the London area. However, the motion goes far wider than London, so I hope that the House will forgive me for introducing a different aspect from an exclusively rural area 250 miles away in the west of the country. I wish also to call on my experience in my youth, many years ago, when I represented the inner city of Liverpool.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: My hon. Friend did it very well.

Mr. Steen: I am grateful for that encouragement.

Concern about the environment is moving further and further up the political agenda. it is becoming quite fashionable, and to talk about green issues is in vogue. People are aware of the problems caused by the hole in the ozone layer, and everyone is talking about global warming and the destruction of the rain forests. They are critical issues and people are right to be concerned about them. The Government are also right to be taking some action —although most of us would agree that it is not enough —to minimise pollution. However, what affects people most is not global issues but the local environment—the point made in my hon. Friend's motion.

People's own areas, their neighbourhoods, their villages and their towns are all important. All hon. Members know that when we knock on doors, whether in or out of election time, and talk about macro-economic issues, people become boss-eyed and say, "Come and look out the back, we have not had a litter collection for a fortnight." The understandable interests of people relate to their backyards and their immediate environment. Those hon. Members who can say to them, "We will get that litter cleared up", rather than talking about major world issues, can be assured of their votes.

The environment is all important, and people are concerned about any changes. All hon. Members receive hundreds of letters when any change is proposed in the immediate environment in which people live. Whether for better or for worse, most people perceive all changes to be for the worse. Bypasses or new housing estates are far more likely to provoke letters than is the hole in the ozone layer. During the past three months, my postbag has contained hundreds of letters about planning and environmental issues and about local life in the villages and towns of Devon, but only half a dozen about the tropical rain forests and the ozone layer. The local environment is immediate and critical to most people.

The environment must change if it is to su cannot be locked into a time warp. People's needs and the environment must change with them. It i say that if the environment is to change to meet c needs, we must ensure that we have correctly ant the needs of tomorrow. That is really the troubl months ago I spent a day at the Office of Po Censuses and Surveys, trying to get a grasp o forecasts demographic change. I came away unco that anyone really understood where the populatio go, why, and when. For example, in the 1970s th forecast the need for many hundreds of thous houses to be built in the south. Of course, such a becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. Those houses h built in the south because the county structure pl account of the forecast that more people would in the south. Every time the OPCS forecasts that t be a growth of population in a particular area, a time the statisticians in the Department Environment say, "Yes, there will be that grow planners allow new building and the growth foll

In 1988, the Government said that 165,000 n would be needed by the turn of the centur south-east. They have now decided that de declining and that only 40,000 will be needed. think that the OPCS has any more idea than an of how many houses are needed and exactly wher expensive operation. I am sure that my hon. F Minister could tell us how many hundreds of sta are employed by the Department of the Enviro work out population forecasts. The counties statisticians working out where populations will get it wrong.

I understand that single flats and small h currently being built, on the basis that more old p living longer and there are more single people a mothers. That particular boom has passed, yet current policy. In fact, what is now ne three-bedroomed houses for the babies of boomers. That is the current demand. The sys slow to respond to current circumstances that bu still building single flats for the elderly and mothers. Not only are the figures wrong, but so of the units.

In 1992, people will be coming to this country Community and from eastern Europe, and, a l Britain will have some of the Hong Kong Ch cannot consider population trends in a time warp consider movements in world populations which the lives and the local environment of many peop not have either the numbers or the type of build There is conflicting evidence from acade statisticians about the demographic and social t Ermisch's report "Fewer babies, longer liv excellent analysis of the probable trend.

Having determined that there is great confus numbers and movements, we must recognise tha be changes and that we must deal with the p where to put people who want new homes. Minister at the Department of the Environment that there should be a free market and that peo be allowed to build wherever they wanted. He fo there would be 394,000 more houses in the sout that if he could possibly allow it, the number doubled. He suggested that if buildings coul wherever people wanted, it would reduce inf

cause the economy to boom because there would be no housing shortage. That would tackle high mortgage repayments, which are the largest single vehicle for inflation. He said that if everybody could buy a house at half the present price, Britain's economy would boom, and that the reason why it was not booming was the housing shortage.

Mr. Simon Hughes: One can change the system of house financing to overcome both inflation and shortage by altering mortgage tax relief, without removing all planning controls. The Minister to whom the hon. Gentleman refers can have had no concern for the environment if he suggested that people should be allowed to choose where they build without control. That would impose the biggest blight of all on the environment.

Mr. Steen: That is why I do not agree with the Minister who made that suggestion. Such a policy would have a profound effect not only on environment but on this country's inflationary tendencies and interest rates. I do not go along that line, but it is worth mentioning.

Local plans provide the only opportunity for residents and interested parties to draw up a blueprint for future development that will protect the immediate countryside and locality. I am most encouraged by the view expressed by Ministers over the past few years that if effective and up-to-date local plans exist, the Government will honour them and safeguard the right of local people to enforce them. The introduction of local plans and the provision of new housing within them is an important step in the right direction.

Cheap, affordable housing can be built outside the area covered by local plans. Even though the parish, district and county may approve a local plan that regulates development in any particular area, a loophole exists in that low-cost, affordable housing—which we all welcome in rural areas—can be developed outside that plan. Green field sites outside villages and towns will be the subject of planning permission for low-cost, affordable properties of the sort that have become so rare because new council housing has not been built to replace that which has been sold. Villages will be extended, just as they were in the 1950s and 1960s by public housing estates. In my constituency, council housing can be found just outside the villages. In future, villages will be kept sacrosanct, as they should be, by the local plan, with council housing estates located just outside them. Many of those properties will have been sold off or be occupied by a declining number of local people. A new estate will then be built of private housing, in the same way as public housing estates were built in the 1950s and 1960s, for younger people and those who cannot afford to buy property in the villages themselves because second-time buyers and holiday lets have forced up prices. Scarcity, resulting in an inflationary spiral, means that younger people just cannot afford those prices.

Low-cost starter developments should be encouraged, but cheap and affordable housing does not have to be badly designed and constructed from poor quality materials. It is not so much development to which people object, but its design and appearance. Bad design is to be found in estates all over the south and south-west, and that fuels anxiety about the environment. In highlighting that aspect, my hon. Friend the Member for Romford should perhaps also reach a conclusion. The only conclusion that can be reached is that development is not a bad th Villages cannot remain in a time warp or stand still. where there is to be development, it must be of quality.

The Government have been wrong to resist testin quality of new buildings. In the ca[illegible] of a collectio buildings, a panel of designers and architects shoul established at each local authority planning leve examine the design of a development and the quality o materials that will be used, and to offer prac comments, so that the final appearance is much sympathetically related to the environment.

In addition to all the problems that I have alr mentioned, there has been a failure to deal properly the infrastructure, despite the increasing population i south of England. One should not provide new h without ensuring that there are sufficient public fun finance a complementary infrastructure. The popul of South Hams has grown by 20 per cent. over the pa years, but there has been no increase in the funds avai for police cover, school places, hospital beds, supplies, or sewage disposal. That influx of people ove past decade has not been accompanied by a grow public investment. The National Rivers Authority rightly recommended an embargo on all new develop in Dartmouth and Kingsweir. The NRA is beginnin use its teeth, and is saying, "Until you put the sewera order, you cannot go on building more housing."

Private companies have been allowed to dev without the support of a corresponding public infras ture. I welcome the NRA's intervention. The neces infrastructure does not mean just adequate sewe provision but recreational facilities, extra police c better schools and sufficient doctors. Although plan authorities have tried to grant permission on the basis the planning gain to the developer will be returned t community, getting the private developer to cover aspect will knock up the price of his houses. Propert young people will then be more expensive than it sh be, which will in turn add to inflation, as buyers higher incomes to pay for their houses.

One or two of my hon. Friends mentioned derelict I have been speaking about that subject in the Hous the past 12 years, and I apologise for repeating my However, it is clearly right that we should find ou amount of vacant public land that exists in our towns cities and is surplus to requirements. The right Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) spoke a surplus land in his constituency, and it is true that areas of underutilised, derelict, vacant land are avai which should be used first for building before we sta eat into the green fields outside our towns.

It is paradoxical that it was my right hon. Friend Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine), the new Secreta State for the Environment, who, as a Minister, set u public land registers in 1981. The registers were set u identify all land in public ownership in this country w was surplus to requirements. In 1982, I believe th amounted to about 120,000 acres. To the credit of Government, about 60,000 acres has already been However, our planning process creates public va dormant, derelict, under-utilised land. So, however m land is sold, more is coming on to the register.

Furthermore, the land register is selective. As a re much land which should be on the register is excl because it is the wrong shape or size, or because the p

[Mr. Steen]

authority has plans for the land. When a public utility is privatised, its land is taken off the public register because it is private.

Despite all the sales, and everything that has been done to reduce the amount of vacant land, about 90,000 acres of public land has still not been utilised. Academics generally consider that that figure would be 200,000 acres if the limitations and conditions which prevent certain land from being included were lifted.

I suspect that one of the issues that the Minister will wish to deal with in his wind-up speech is whether he will find a way—perhaps in the new planning Bill—to lift the conditions which exclude many acres of public vacant land, so that people will know how many hundreds of thousands of acres of vacant, dormant land are surplus to requirements. The Secretary of State for the Environment must take powers to do something about that.

Since 1978, I have been asking successive Secretaries of State to do something to release public vacant dormant, derelict, or under-utilised land. Every Secretary of State does a little more, but none has been adventurous enough to ensure that that land is used before the green field sites around our towns and cities are spoilt. Will the Minister offer us something a little more practical today than his predecessors have done? They have cried crocodile tears and said that it was dreadful that we had all this waste land and we must do something about it, but no one has done much.

I direct the Minister's attention to a splendid publication entitled "Public Land Utilisation Management Schemes", which I had the privilege of writing some 18 months ago. It illustrated the scale of the problem, and invited the Government to adopt a sensible solution. It is a disgrace that more public waste land has not been developed. It would vastly improve our urban areas if it was. Not only does it mean that rural land outside our cities is being used, when derelict land within them could be used first, but vacant land has a dramatic effect upon surrounding property values. It also affects the neighbourhood, as the tax base on the land is reduced. Local shops do not have the custom that they would have if the land were developed. One would have thought that there would be an incentive to public authorities to use the land, as they would then have a greater rate base, whether it were used for industry or, if it was developed for residential use, from the community charge.

I have mentioned these matters before in the House, and I do not apologise for mentioning them again in such a wide-ranging debate. Their importance cannot be over-emphasised. Unless we get forecasts, planning and design right, we shall damage the character of the local environment and diminish the quality of people's lives.

11.53 am

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I, too, congratulate the hon. Member for Romford (Mr. Neubert) for his widely termed notion, and I apologise to the hon. Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen) for bringing the debate back to the area I am most concerned about and familiar with—the capital. The motion states:

"while welcoming the general improvement in people's living standards and the increasing freedom which they enjoy in their everyday lives".

It would be wrong to suggest that there have some benefits for some people in eleven and a hal Conservative Government, but all things are When one considers my borough of Newham, i end of London, or indeed, when one considers L a whole, one realises that everything is relative a large number of people have suffered badly as a eleven and a half years of Thatcherite policies.

The front page of yesterday's edition of *Mirror* carried a picture of the ex-Prime Ministe the back of a car, looking tearful as she left street. A similiar picture appeared in the *Daily* not think that those pictures should have been The way newspapers intrude into private unacceptable and vulgar. I did not like that pi drew no satisfaction from it. On a human level, felt compassion for the Prime Minister becaus understand how she felt—but on a political leve compassion for her. Having been ousted premiership by her own party, she was weeping a but at my weekly Friday night advice surgery in tonight people will be weeping buckets of tears. exaggeration—it happens every week. I take a tissues with me to hand out to constituents wh tearful when trying to describe their prob housing, social security, visas, and how to su breakfast to dinner—assuming that they are a those meals. They describe circumstances w largely been brought about by central G policies.

When I see the ex-Prime Minister weeping tear on the front page of the *Daily Mirror* and t constituents crying buckets, I have no c whatever for her at a political level.

Yesterday we heard the new Prime Minis about looking at policies afresh, at his Minister's Question Time, saying that he was hi He said that he did not intend to beat his chest a those policies that he was intent on changing, b it clear that he intended to change a number of night, in a speech in Manchester, I believe, he talk about a more caring society—an admissio is something to rectify in our present society absolutely right to say that there is much to b that policies will have to be changed. He w answer to the House and to the electorate, an why he supported those policies as a loyal Minister for all those years when he now says t to be changed. We need to know that. Enorm has been done to my constituency, to my borc London by eleven and a half years of the uncaring, selfish Thatcherite policies that the Minister supported so loyally in the past.

I remember Councillor John Major o borough council. He was a good chair of certainly a good one for a Tory but he was s kind of money that borough councils can about these days. I believe that he presided ov investment budget of £100 million. Things ha dramatically since then.

Now that we have Prime Minister Majo know whether Chancellor Major is complete buried, or whether there will be some renais progressive figure whom Lambeth witnessed b and 1971. I should be the first to welcome the

I doubt whether the changes in policy will be so drastic —as one of my hon. Friends said, they may have changed the singer, but the song remains the same.

In those eleven and a half years, my borough has suffered greatly. We are the second most deprived local authority area in England. Unemployment has gone up dramatically. In 1979, we had 6 per cent. unemployment, and by the mid-1980s, it was up to 18 per cent. Thank goodness, it has come down to only 10 per cent., but that is still considerably higher than it was in 1979, and once again it is on the increase. In 1986, the average earnings of Newham male workers were 15 per cent. below the London average, and by 1988, the most recent figure that I have, they were 19 per cent. below. In 1986, women in Newham received average London earnings, but by 1988, these had fallen 7 per cent. below. One can see the same in London as a whole. In 1979, unemployment in Greater London was 3·4 per cent. In September 1990, it was 6·3 per cent. Not once since 1979, all those years of the Tory economic miracle, did unemployment fall below 3·4 per cent., the level inherited by the former Prime Minister in 1979.

As can be imagined, there is much poverty in my borough. In 1989, 35 per cent. of households were dependent on income support. In 1985-86, the DHSS single payment grant for the borough was £2·5 million. That was money for grants for specific vital items of household equipment. There was a change in the regulations in 1988 and the money that was made available to the social fund budget was limited to £1·8 million. We knew that there would be an increase in demand, but the amount of money that could be called on was dramatically reduced.

Newham health authority estimates that it lost £2·5 million between 1982 and 1987. Between 1979 and 1989, the number of hospital beds fell by one third. When one considers the indices which matter to ordinary people, the terms of today's motion fall flat. When I hear about the economic miracle, and all this social advance, I accept that in certain areas and among certain categories of the population, benefits have been derived from eleven and a half years of Thatcherite policies, but it has mostly been by those who can afford the best. The poorest have got poorer in comparison with the rich, as the statistics show clearly.

This gap is shown most markedly in housing and the homeless, in London as a whole and Newham in particular. Some 70 per cent. of all the cases with which I have to deal in my advice surgery—it will be the same tonight—involve housing problems. I suspect that it is the same for virtually every other London Member of Parliament and probably for a large number representing constituencies outside London. People come to my surgery desperately wanting somewhere to live, but there is nothing that one can say. All I can provide is a shoulder to cry on, with my infinite supply of tissues. Unfortunately, I cannot offer them what they really want —the early prospect of somewhere decent to live.

One does not have to have a PhD in housing administration to find the causes of the problem. They are the massive reduction in housing investment programme money, which is down 80 per cent. in real terms since 1979, the attacks on local authorities and the restrictions placed on them in their attempts to deal with housing problems. Make no mistake about it—local authorities still have responsibility for housing. When mortgages go up because of high interest rates and the building societies repossess homes, people turn to the local authority, which c put them in bed and breakfast. That is crazy. On have thought that it would not be beyond the Ministers to devise a scheme whereby local authori building societies could get together and work ou is cheaper for a local authority to pay the building to keep people in their homes rather than put ther and breakfast accommodation. Furthermore, it co to put people in bed and breakfast accommodation build new units of accommodation. Those economics of the madhouse, particularly in Londo the pressure is greatest.

My case is proved by the number of council starts in my constituency in the eleven and a ha since the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. T became Prime Minister. In 1978-79, Newham start new units of accommodation. In 1979-80, it was 4 figures go down, but I shall not go through all of will take just the last few years. In 1987-88, there starts; in 1988-89, there were 105; in 1989-90, the 191, and in 1990-91 the number of starts is estimat a big fat zero—Newham will build no new accommodation.

On the other hand, applications from homeless more than doubled from 1,059 in 1981 to 2,347 in The real scandal, and what really annoys me—I ha the point before and I shall continue to make it bec situation is so outrageous—is that the cost of p temporary housing in Newham has increase £52,000 in 1983-84 to £5·5 million in 1987-88. crazy, given how many units of accommodation c built for that amount of money if the Governmen only sanction such expenditure. The figure for breakfast and temporary housing this year wil million.

In common with other London councils, part Labour councils, Newham has been able to decre cost by using leased accommodation, which mak because there are more vacant properties about Newham and in London as a whole because cannot sell units or building societies have rep them. Four out of five vacant properties in Londo the private sector, not the public sector.

As the sane individual I know you to be, Mr. Speaker, you would think that it would make sens local authority to lease from those who cannot sell who want to rent so as to accommodate the homele the Government want to stop that, and I want the to explain why. Such a scheme would sure everyone, but in the Cabinet there is an ide hangup, which I assume still exists, about lettin authorities be involved in housing. The Governme local authorities to provide basic accommodation as the final safety net, but no more than th Government's ideological fixation about the role authorities stands in the way of dealing with on most critical problems of London and of my bor that of housing.

The problem in London as a whole is similar to Newham. In 1979, there were few people begging streets of London or sleeping in cardboard b challenge Conservative Members to rebut that. there were 1,200 families in bed and breakfast in L and 14,000 had been accepted as homeless. In 199 eleven and a half years of economic miracle, progress and Thatcherite policies, there are 3,000

[Mr. Tony Banks]

sleeping on the streets of London and 8,000 families, comprising some 30,000 people, in bed and breakfast accommodation. There are 32,000 families homeless, and young people denied social security are forced to sleep in shop doorways on the Strand or the subways under Waterloo bridge—what a testament to eleven and a half years of Thatcherite policies. I therefore do not feel sorry for the Prime Minister, weeping a little tear as she moved from No. 10 Downing street to a mock-Georgian mansion in Southwark. When I think of the tragedy that she has inflicted on so many families in my constituency and in London as a whole, I have no compassion for her whatever.

In 1978, London councils built no fewer than 13,000 council houses for rent. In 1989, the figure for London as a whole was just over 1,000. My borough was building more than 1,000 council houses per year when the right hon. Member for Finchley was first elected Prime Minister of this country. When will the Government wake up to this enormous crisis, realise how much misery has been inflicted on so many Londoners and start to do something about it instead of talking about the mythical miracles that we are supposed to have experienced in the past eleven and a half years?

In 1979 it was possible for people to afford to buy their own homes. Now, however, we have astronomical interest rates—higher than in any other European country. Our inflation rate and balance of payments deficit are also higher than in any other European country—some miracle! In 1979, young people could afford to buy their own homes, but the average price of a home in London in 1990 is £85,000, so it is impossible for large numbers of people—indeed, for all those to whom I have referred, the genuinely homeless—to afford to buy their own homes.

Local authorities provide the basic services that people need in their day-to-day lives. When I walk about the streets of Forest Gate, people regularly ask me what I am going to do about litter on the streets, the broken paving stones, the abandoned or illegally parked cars, and about housing—I have never yet been asked what I am going to do about the Gulf. That is not to suggest that the people of Newham are not interested in what is happening in the Gulf—when we have solved their day-to-day problems, we can get down to talking about the situation in the Gulf, but ordinary people will not spend a great deal of time thinking about world events if their streets are not clean, they have nowhere to live and there are no buses or trains to get them to work in the morning. Local authorities deal with many, if not all, people's basic requirements. That is why the local authority role in London, as elsewhere, is so crucial to the lives of our people. Local democracy underpins parliamentary democracy. In those circumstances, one would have thought that there would be a genuine partnership between central Government and local government in dealing with these problems.

I am not a natural consensual Member of Parliament. As a socialist, I bitterly oppose capitalism. The hon. Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley) paid me a tribute when he said that I and my hon. Friends the Members for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton) and for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) fight hard for the economic advancement of our borough. We regularly invite Ministers to Newham. I have no hang-ups about talking to Tory Ministers—if I could win benefits fo would sit down and sup with the devil, and h certain Ministers to Newham, I feel that I h that. I do not understand why I cannot get t to the Government—if boroughs do not sa like you because you're a Tory Governme Labour local authorities", why are the Go prepared to walk half-way to meet us? Wh partnership between central Governmen authorities gone? Local authorities used to get on with the job they were elected to d basic services. Why do the Governme confront, attack and denigrate local author they slander local councillors and use pejora referring to "spendrift Labour councils," in when they know in their heart of hearts tha authorities are struggling as hard as they p deal with enormous social and economic p

I accept that some authorities are not so e ought to be, and that some of them spend could be better spent on other projects, reason for the Government's wholesale as authorities since 1979. I hope that Councill will re-emerge at some stage and remember as a local authority member, and that that change many of the policies pursued by h who had no contact with local authorities— fact that her father was an alderman—an love, affection or concern for local author

The amount of money being taken awa local authorities amounts to billions of p hardly surprising that they have run into rates increases. Money has been taken av regularly by central Government, but authorities are provided with the resource their problems there will be no respite for t area, or for the people of London as a wh

The hon. Members for Southwark ar (Mr. Hughes) and for Eltham referred to t London's transport could be improved, needs to be improved. We have one overcrowded, overpriced and inefficient tra in the whole of Europe. It may even be the system in the EEC. If London's tran improved, additional resources must be There must also be a strategic plan for tr very well to say that London boroughs providing cycle lanes, but it is pretty silly lane or a bus lane which goes only as far boundary and then disappears. There mu plan, and London needs a strategic autho planning, transport and other services provided only on a regional basis. Londo Birmingham or Manchester, nor is it a sm region, and if a region is to be properly p a strategic regional authority.

Another legacy of eleven and a Thatcherism in London is an empty coun monument to the right hon. Member fo Government wanted to turn it into a lu surprise, surprise—the deal fell through that? It was because high interest rat pressures on the property market and s wanted to be involved in mega-million d fell through, and I am glad that it did. I those in the consortium a great deal finan

that they have learnt their lesson. The Government are now thrashing around trying to find another use for the building. I suggest that if there are to be any policy changes, one of them should be directed towards county hall and the need to restore a strategic authority for London.

The Minister should make it clear that the Government will do nothing with that empty county hall until we have had an election and the people of London, and of the country, have had an opportunity to say whether they want to proceed with Toryism—Thatcherism with a new face and a big pair of glasses—or whether they want socialism.

When the Labour Government are elected, we shall reintroduce a new strategic authority for London. It will be called the London council, and it will be responsible for transport, for planning, for the emergency services and for sewage and waste disposal, because we can achieve the efficiencies and economies of scale by planning those services regionally. That is the sensible way to plan for our capital city—the only capital city which does not have city-wide local government. It is done everywhere else, and it ought to be done here. In their hearts, Conservative Members know that we need a strategic authority for London. If, under the new premiership, they have not the courage to throw in the face of the right hon. Member for Finchley the absurdity of her views and her attacks on the GLC, the next Labour Government most certainly will. That is what Londoners want—and when they have a Labour Government, that is exactly what they will get.

12.20 pm

Mr. Gerald Bowden (Dulwich): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Romford (Mr. Neubert) on his good fortune in the ballot and compliment him on his choice of subject.

During the debate, and particularly during the flights of fantasy of the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks), I pondered our dependence on the word "environment". As Conservative Members must say now, I have modest origins, but it was not an unlettered household. I never heard the word "environment" used during my childhood. It was about 1965, when I was at university, before I heard it used. I wondered how we dealt with the concept that it embraces without the benefit of the word in currency. I suspect that we used the word "community" or "society", which had an elitist ring about it, and that we felt that there was some local connection which "environment", in its broader sense, now embraces.

I became conscious of the importance of "community" —the local connection—shortly after becoming an hon. Member and following the welcome abolition of the GLC and the devolving of its powers and responsibilities to the boroughs. Some boroughs dealt with them well, and some less than satisfactorily.

One task that the GLC did well was leisure and recreation, particularly the management of the parks under its control. Dulwich park was one of the GLC's particular prides. When it was handed over to Southwark, one of the first decisions that Southwark took was to close the park on Christmas day. I then became aware of the strength of public feeling on such issues. I cannot recall an event or decision that increased my postbag to the extent that that small decision did. Many local residents, and indeed those from further afield, placed reliance on the opportunity to walk in the park on Christmas da family and I had many times. It gave the opport kids to try out their new tricycles, hoops or toys parents to get them out of the house on Christ

That decision was made by Southwark counc am glad to say that it will not make it again. Mu Christmas day that year was spent at the locked Dulwich park explaining why it was happening who were unaware of the change. For that r became conscious that local recreational needs represented by the local authority which control

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): I thank Gentleman for giving way, especially as I have arrived. London Transport delayed me—but not hours. He is making the same point as my hon. Fr Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) that poor, hard-pressed inner city areas need a strategy to provide recreational facilities. On that should have thought that the hon. Gentlema support the reintroduction of a strategic auth provide resources for poorer areas.

Mr. Bowden: The hon. Gentleman is rather jum gun. I am coming round to the opposite point of v he has given me the opportunity to make it more Local authorities can be efficient or inefficient. E park was a GLC park, but it is much better Wandsworth council than it ever was by the GL

Mr. Corbyn: Come on.

Mr. Bowden: You go and look at it, my old frie your pardon, Mr. Deputy Speaker. A comparison the way in which Battersea park is run and the which Dulwich park is managed by Southwark shows where responsibility is well recognised and d and where it is ill-recognised and badly delivered

It is not only local authorities, the boroughs, failing to recognise and meet the needs of th community and protect the local environment, other agencies which may be less accountable tha of the London boroughs. If I were not participatin debate, I would be at Sydenham hill woods, woodland is being managed by the London Wildli with a view to providing recreational facilities fo who wish to enjoy the wilderness aspect of woodla has been there since the ice age. It is par responsibility of Southwark, and partly of the governors of Alleyn's College of God's Gift, who a readily recognised as the estates governors of I college. Like Southwark, they have an interest in la adjoins that ancient woodland. An enduring camp which I have been involved has tried to resist p develop land bordering on that ancient wo Southwark sought to develop council housing there perhaps was a commendable ideal. I could not that, with such a narrow majority as I have, ther have been a political motive in developing a counc there, in the often mistaken belief that council automatically vote Labour.

Currently before the planning authorities is a proposed by the estate governors of Dulwich co develop the site adjoining the ancient woodlan scheme, quite rightly, has met tremendous opp from the local community, the local councillors a My opposition is especially appropriate as I h

[Mr. Bowden]

opportunity to draw to the House's attention that affront to the local environment. If one develops that adjoining land the topography will be changed. The water courses and rainfall tables will be altered so that the balance of nature is disturbed. That issue is part of the local environment, an environment about which we must be vigilant to ensure that it conserved.

The planned Channel tunnel rail link also has wider implications for the local environment. If we are part of Europe and have a fixed link with it via the tunnel, it is logical and sensible to develop a rail link from that tunnel to serve all of the United Kingdom. It is important that we do not merely have a prestige fast route to London to a prestige London terminal at King's Cross. It is a desirable ideal to have a fast, fixed link to serve the United Kingdom, able to convey freight and passengers. That link would also have environmental benefits as freight which is currently carried by lorries on the road and crosses the Channel by ferry causes damage. It is also sensible for those who get on a train at Edinburgh or Glasgow to be able to travel straight to Paris or Brussels without changing at King's Cross. Those who want to travel to the continent from the west country, Cardiff or Swansea should be able to travel direct without having to change at Paddington for King's Cross—crossing London by whatever means they can find.

We have had some limited success in opposing the half-baked, cack-handed plans of British Rail for its original link to terminate at King's Cross. However, reconsideration of those plans has brought attendant damage to the area that was to be originally affected—Warwick gardens in my constituency. When the plans were first proposed they caused great turmoil and anger. Those original plans have now been shelved and will be reconsidered, but, as a result, a blight of searing depth has settled on the community. It is difficult to see how those dispirited feelings can be revived without providing a positive alternative to the original plans.

Mr. Arbuthnot: To what extent is that blight the result of the old compensation law which means that people whose houses are compulsorily purchased receive only the market value for them—a pretty poor market value? The proposed Planning and Compensation Bill will, I hope, offer a 25 per cent. increase over and above the market value of houses to be so purchased. Does my hon. Friend agree that that should deal with the problem to some extent?

Mr. Bowden: The key phrase in my hon. Friend's intervention is "to some extent". I know that the Planning and Compensation Bill had its Second Reading in another place earlier this week. I applaud its provisions because I have always believed that we have been foolishly small-minded about the compensation rules that apply.

If one's land or home is compulsorily acquired one is not only involved in the anguish and agony of having to move, but in a tussle with professionals arguing about what the market value of one's property might be. That has engendered resentment and delay. It would be much better if, as suggested, there was a 25 per cent. premium on the market value. People would then feel that they were receiving a windfall and would greet such a purchase with enthusiasm. I also suspect that the whole process would be cheaper in the long run because the expensive lawyers, the planning silks, and valuers would no longer argue the case while charging great fees. The only people who make a profit out of such activities are those professionals, but their services would no longer be required to such an extent. The process would be speedier, there would be more satisfied customers and the interests of the public at large would be better served.

However, although new legislation will help some of my constituents in the Warwick gardens area, it will have no effect on the planning blight. The areas in which there is no requirement for British Rail to acquire the homes or the land are most affected by the blight. The homes, quality of life and way of life of those who live there have been damaged by the proximity of the operations.

Under its statutory requirement, British Rail has purchased properties that people wish to sell. Those properties fall within a corridor in which the route and the operations work may go. However, the people who live around that area have no right to have their properties acquired. Whether it acquires adjoining properties is at the discretion of British Rail and it can acquire properties in cases of hardship, if it wishes.

I am dealing with about 12 cases of hardship at present. I am negotiating with British Rail and I hope that we shall come to a satisfactory solution. These cases involve people who have agreed to sell because they are moving away, perhaps because they have a new job. I have two cases in which couples have decided to part on amicable terms and a divorce is pending or has taken place. The couples have decided to sell one property and each partner will buy another property elsewhere, but the sales have been thwarted by the blight on the area. There is a tragi-comic situation of a divorced couple who are obliged to live together in the same house. That could be the substance of a Whitehall farce, but for those involved, it is a tragedy. Such issues arise as a result of an authority—in this case British Rail—not looking at matters with a great interest in the community and in the human environment, but applying the dead letter of the law to a problem that should be dealt with in a human, sympathetic way.

It is especially sad that Warwick gardens has been affected by planning blight. It was first developed about 150 to 180 years ago and it contains a number of fine Georgian and Regency properties. The area went into decline and then became an area of London in which young people with little money, but with a lot of energy, could make their first family homes. They worked with loving care on their own homes and co-operated with their neighbours. Over the past 15 years, Warwick gardens has grown as a community of great maturity. There are young and old residents, there are original residents and those who have moved in from outside. Those involved in the early stages of the professions gave their talents, time and energy to creating and promoting a local community.

At a stroke, with the threat of the Channel tunnel rail link sub-surface junction at Warwick gardens, the neighbourhood has declined. Properties purchased by British Rail have been left vacant and are now occupied by squatters. Properties that had been lovingly maintained are now becoming derelict. If we are not careful, the area may sink back into its old dereliction within 15 years.

Local authorities, statutory authorities such as British Rail and bodies such as the estates governors of Dulwich

college must play their part and bear their responsibilities in ensuring that their work is for the benefit of the local community.

It is particularly apposite that, in one of his first speeches, our new Prime Minister referred to

"a country that is at ease with itself".

Perhaps I may borrow that phrase and adapt it slightly. We want communities that are at ease with themselves. In introducing the debate, my hon. Friend the Member for Romford has set the tone and made a keynote speech for the years ahead, in which, under our new Prime Minister, we shall try to ensure that our local environment is such that communities can live at ease with themselves.

12.39 pm

Mr. Martyn Jones (Clwyd, South-West): I thank the hon. Member for Romford (Mr. Neubert) for choosing this subject for debate. I was unlucky enough to come second in the ballot for private Members' motions, which is the worst position in which to be because one is obliged to sit here all morning listening to hon. Members talking about the first motion on the Order Paper in the knowledge that one's own motion will never be reached. Thanks to the fact that the hon. Member for Romford has kept the wording of the motion so wide, however, I shall perhaps be forgiven for concentrating on the local environment of the people of rural Wales.

The hon. Member for Romford contrasted the free market system engendered by the Tory Government with what he described as the socialist country of Russia and the starvation that it faces. I dispute his description. The USSR may describe itself as socialist but it is in fact an example of state capitalism. Self-praise is no recommendation, as has been illustrated by the Government's description of themselves as caring. I would also remind the hon. Gentleman that two thirds of the world's population are starving, predominantly under the capitalist system.

The motion is important none the less and, as the hon. Gentleman acknowledged at the outset, it is not essentially a party-political motion. But hon. Members should recognise that we have been discussing state intervention or intervention by society as a whole in the actions of some of its members, whether it be in planning, in the disposal of waste and litter or in the removal of graffiti, and that that approach conflicts markedly with the Government's stance.

The hon. Gentleman concentrated on urban areas. I venture to suggest that there are much greater threats to the quality of life than litter and graffiti. They include acid rain, global warming, the depletion of the ozone layer, the generation of huge amounts of waste that are simply dumped in the sea or in holes in the ground, heavy metals and nuclear waste. All those factors affect people's immediate local environment—in the long term, in a potentially lethal way. In some places, they have already proved lethal. We have witnessed the dumping of PCBs in the Love canal in the United States, on top of which houses were then built, for heaven's sake. Admittedly, that is an extreme example, but such things will happen more often unless we take action against those who pollute our environment. Other well-known examples are the accident at Bhopal and the toxic algal blooms in the North sea.

As we are unlikely to reach my motion——

Dr. Dafydd Elis Thomas (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): Shame.

Mr. Jones: It is a shame because, although we have had two short debates on rural Wales recently, we have yet to address the essential problems of farming in Wales.

Dr. Thomas: May I, too, record my regret that we have not reached the hon. Gentleman's excellent motion, which I would have supportedly strongly. I am sure that, while staying within the rules of order, the hon. Gentleman will be able to say something about the agricultural environment in Wales.

Mr. Jones: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his intervention. I certainly hope to make one or two points about that without straying too far from the motion.

I call attention to the problems of rural Wales and to its quality of life, which were hardly touched on by the hon. Member for Romford. That is not surprising, because he represents an urban area and he is probably unaware of the problems of the rural environment. However, I believe that they are equally important, not only for the people who live in rural areas in England and Wales, but for people who live in cities and wish to enjoy that rural environment.

There will be a catastrophic impact on the local environment of Welsh people if farming in Wales is allowed to decline. Farming throughout Britain is under pressure from two directions. First, intensification and modernisation threaten the industry's sustainability. They also harm the natural environment, the social structure in rural areas and public health. Secondly, current methods of farm support—and even this free market Government seem to turn a blind eye to state intervention in agriculture —are discredited by farmers, consumers and taxpayers.

Farmers can continue to maintain the countryside in Wales, an environment which most people want to continue as it is, only if there is support for farmers, not for prices. Price support does not help the consumers of produce or of the environment in rural areas.

Farmers cannot continue to protect the visual and amenity value of the rural environment if prices continue to decline. At last month's draft ewe sale at Machynlleth prices were abysmally low. The average ewe was fetching £15, whereas it fetched £27 last year and £35 the year before. If prices decline and price support is also forced down by the need to reach agreement in the GATT Uruguay round, farming has little future in the hills of Wales.

The price decline of produce, coupled with higher prices for machinery and inputs, huge interest rate rises, the poll tax, reduced services in rural areas—and bus services have been decimated in rural areas since deregulation—have all had an effect. Water connection prices have quintupled since the privatisation of water and telephone connection charges have increased. Post offices are closing and small shops are becoming non-viable. The rural environment in Wales and elsewhere is under serious threat.

If farmers are driven off the land, which, as I have said, is already happening, whole parishes will become wastelands. Faced with that depressing scenario, the Government must consider whether the time is right for an alternative policy for agriculture.

I realise that that is extremely difficult for a monetarist free-market Government, forced into state intervention by the common agricultural policy of the European

[Mr. Jones]

Community and by the votes of farmers in rural areas—at least, by the votes that they used to receive from farmers in rural areas—but the Government cannot ignore the problem because it will not go away no matter how much the Government would like it to do so.

People want to enjoy the rural environment. They do not want it to revert to a derelict industrial site. However, what can the Government do? The Labour party believes that there is only one alternative which may be very distasteful to free marketeers. There should be output control, or supply management, which can take various forms, some of which will be more appropriate to certain commodities than to others. Those forms include extensification—or taking a proportion of output out of production—and set aside, which has already been tried in a small way, which involves taking a proportion of land out of production. The latter could have some environmental disadvantages because it alters the visual environment of the countryside detrimentally. The forms of control also include quotas, which are especially effective for commodities when there are only a few purchasers, and nitrogen quotas, which would restrict nitrogen applications. That would reduce yields and pollution, both of which would be beneficial.

Other policies could be pursued to great effect. For example, green premia would encourage low input systems and the positive management of countryside features by farmers. I suppose, in effect, that that is an extension of the environmentally sensitive areas. It would be much more used and much more effective.

Farming is an essential element in the maintenance and creation of environmental value. Integrated policies with agricultural and environmental objectives can encourage farming practices that lead to diverse and high-quality landscapes and maintain ecological systems. Such practices would pay more heed to traditional husbandry methods and less to production intensity. At present, farmers' only alternative to the economic mess that they are in is to increase production or to go out of business, both of which would have a devastating effect on the local environment. A less production-oriented view of agriculture could also recognise the role of small and part-time farmers in rural areas and rural affairs.

The current focus on the agricultural aspects of farming means a policy bias towards the larger farm, despite the clear part that smaller units can play in the maintenance of environmental quality, especially in Wales.

There is a danger that if the role of farming is not shifted in that way towards environmental and agricultural requirements, the decline in the environmental quality of rural areas will accelerate. The need for enhanced agricultural production is declining, and, if agricultural policy remains the guiding principle behind support for rural areas, the justification for public support of rural areas will also decline.

The central importance of the European dimension in rural policy making is inescapable. Farming in each member state will be driven in directions that are determined at EC level, and it is primarily to that level that environmental interests must address themselves. The incorporation of environmental considerations involves a more regional approach to agricultural policy than has hitherto been the case. That should bring economic a political advantages to communities that are by-passed the mainstream of development.

It is necessary to ensure that EC legislation is framed ways that are sufficiently sensitive to be amenable to loc implementation, and to monitor that implementation in adherence to the spirit of EC intentions. I hope th national or regional specialisation of agricultural poli will become easier when the single market is a reality a the credibility of the EC rests less on the continui operation of the common agricultural policy as the or truly common policy.

Individual countries attempting to set high enviro mental standards may face the suspicion that they attempting to restrict free trade and may even encoun threats of legal action. As the single market conce approaches reality, it is vital that the Europe Commission should continue to take the lead environmental matters if the concept of Europe integration is not to be brought into disrepute and clash with national policies are to be prevented. Comm environmental policies must be seen not as an impedim to European integration but as an essential part of it.

An environmental approach stresses the holistic nat of environmental benefits, a characteristic that reflects wide variety of elements that form the environment a the fact that much environmental activity is essentia co-operative, requiring the co-ordination of individ farmers' decisions. It implies a programme for the wh countryside rather than for discrete areas in particu need of protection. Although there is a clear case specific local measures to protect limited sites or featu of particular environmental sensitivity, such a piecem approach on its own is not enough to produce the chan role of farming which is increasingly necessary environmental and financial grounds. The bounda between protected and non-protected areas can only arbitrary, and are increasingly irrelevant in the face pollution and our growing appreciation of ecolog interdependence. The best results will arise from promotion of major changes in farming systems and farming philosophies.

A shift from product price support to environme management payments is capable of simultaneo reducing agricultural output, maintaining farm inco and farm populations, reducing the total cost of suppor society, and providing unequivocal environmental bene such as reduced pollution, improved wildlife habitats landscapes, and improved food quality. That is Lab party policy, and it is the only way forward for preservation and future of farming in Wales and elsewh for consumers, taxpayers and all those who wish to e the rural environment.

12.54 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Environment (Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory): I hope the hon. Member for Clwyd, South-West (Mr. Jones) forgive me if I do not mention all the points he m Although they are important for his constituents and n widely, they fall outside the scope of my minist responsibilities. However, I shall ensure that the rele Government members see his remarks and, w appropriate, respond.

I join in congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Romford (Mr. Neubert), who selected well in choosing this subject for debate. He introduced it with a fund of background knowledge about the environment, drawn from acute observations of the issues and his sustained interest in the subject over many years. His speech and those of other Members have touched on all the environmental issues with which our constituents are concerned. That does not deny the importance of the global issues, which are of increasing concern to the Government.

The hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) rightly said that when people are initially asked about environmental issues that worry them, they tend to list neighbourhood concerns and local issues before turning to the global problems of ozone depletion and global warming which, although important, attract their immediate attention less often.

I pay tribute to my right hon. Friend the Member for Bath (Mr. Patten) for his skill and leadership of the Department of the Environment during the past year, particularly in the context of global issues. It was very much this skill and leadership that enabled this country to participate constructively in a number of international environment conferences and to bring some of them, including that on ozone depletion, to a successful conclusion.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) suggested that the appointment of my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) to the Department of the Environment was a sign of a lessening in the Government's commitment to environmental protection. I assure him that that is not so. I know that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will carry forward, undiminished, our policies to protect and enhance the built and natural environment. My hon. Friend the Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen) spoke about planning issues and the hon. Member for Newham, North-West mentioned a number of housing matters. If I cannot answer them all in this debate, I shall ensure that others read the remarks of those hon. Members.

I think that everyone who has examined the issues would agree that although the Government have a leadership role, the duty of the concerned and responsible individual is also important. A range of issues—from litter to energy efficiency, dog control, and recycling—are best tackled by a partnership between central Government, local government, individuals, voluntary groups and businesses. To achieve that, we need a knowledgeable and well-informed public. Throughout our White Paper and the Environmental Protection Act 1990, we stress the importance of public access to information. The active citizen needs relevant information, a certain amount of which is already available from voluntary groups such as WasteWatch, which produce a good national directory of recycling facilities.

The new Environmental Protection Act marks a milestone in that it sets in place the systematic provision of information. It establishes a framework for public information on diverse subjects such as litter control areas, areas of land that may be contaminated, processes that are subject to integrated pollution control and, perhaps most notably, a range of public registers that will contain raw monitoring data as well as licensing information, to which the public will have access free of charge. Our best defence against exaggerated or baseless scares is a well-informed public, able to make their own judgments about the real risks that we face.

My hon. Friend the Member for Romford made much of the problems of litter, and that theme was picked up by other hon. Members. I agree that a littered high street or locality is not just an eyesore, but a health hazard. A littered area also invites disrespect. To put it more positively, if we can improve our neighbourhoods and keep them clean and litter free, that will invite respect. It is a commonly observed phenomenon that people are more likely to throw litter on to an area that is already littered.

The Environmental Protection Act puts in place many new measures and policies to clean up the country. It is a double approach. We must prevent people from dropping litter, but, recognising that some people will always do so, we have improved the means and the duty to collect it. From 1 April next year, local authorities can employ litter wardens, based on the so-called Westminster model. No doubt they will concentrate mainly on getting people to sweep up their litter, and on asking them not to drop it. However, they will also have the power to hand out fixed penalty notices in appropriate cases. I remind the House that the maximum fine for dropping litter has been increased from £400 to £1,000.

Local authorities will be under a duty to keep their public areas clean. They will need to have regard to a code of practice that is currently before the House. The code has been developed with the aid of an advisory group. containing representatives from local authorities and industry. We have also had advice from the Tidy Britain Group. The main change that the code heralds is a switch from input-related to performance-related cleaning standards. Of course, we understand that, in some cases, that will require more expenditure by local authorities. We therefore commissioned a study by Coopers Lybrand Deloitte to estimate, in a sample of 20 authorities, how much extra funding would be required to comply with the new code. As a result of its findings, an additional £50 million has been taken into account in the revenue support grant settlement for 1991-92.

In addition, the public will be given new enforcement opportunities. They can apply to a magistrates' court for a litter abatement order to require their local authorities to keep their areas litter and refuse-free. We are mobilising public enthusiasm in the right direction.

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): If a member of the public has obtained a litter abatement order, will it be mandatory for local councils to comply with it, or will they have discretion? I hope that it will be compulsory for local authorities to take action, as some of them are laggardly in dealing with litter.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I reassure my hon. Friend that local authorities will have to comply with a court order. If they do not, they will be in breach of it. I hope that most local authorities will comply in advance, when it is drawn to their attention that they are apparently in breach of their duties, and will send someone round to do the necessary work. If a local authority fails to do that, the court will be able to require that it honours its obligation, and will have regard to the code of practice in assessing the standard of street and area cleanliness required.

[Mr. Heathcoat-Amory]

My hon. Friend the Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley) is unable to be in his place at this stage in the debate, but courteously gave me advance notice of his absence. He introduced into the debate the subject of roads and traffic, which was taken up also by the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey. My hon. Friend the Member for Eltham made the good point that occasionally more roads and bypasses are needed and that they can improve the local environment and save lives, by taking traffic away from congested urban areas. In my view a policy of outright opposition to all roads would be irresponsible.

My hon. Friend also made the point that the switch from leaded to unleaded petrol is far from complete, but that change is a good example of a market mechanism delivering an environmental result. Successive Budgets produced a duty differential between leaded and unleaded petrol that has made it financially and environmentally worthwhile for motorists to switch to unleaded fuel. My hon. Friend was right to say that many cars being driven today could use unleaded fuel, and I hope that their owners are not being put off by misleading claims that their vehicles would suffer a significant reduction in performance if they changed.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey occasionally exhibits a lack of liberalism. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Eltham that some of the administrative traffic controls that the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey suggested would be complex and difficult to enforce. However, hon. Members in all parts of the House acknowledge that we must civilise the car. We should also make provision for a higher volume of traffic, because all the projections that I have seen for this country and others point to increased vehicle usage. That does not mean that we will be driving the same sorts of vehicles in the same way.

No doubt great advances will be made in types of fuel, and the electric car could have a part to play—although, on the face of it, electric vehicles would simply move the pollution from the roads to the power stations, and there is a problem with dragging round heavy batteries that work against fuel efficiency. Doubtless, science and technology will rise to the occasion and we will see in the future different cars, driven in different ways, at different speeds, powered by different fuels, and manufactured from different materials. I am glad that manufacturers are giving greater thought and attention to recycling cars at the end of their lives. Instead of old cars being scrapped, more attention should be paid to how they can be taken to pieces and their useful plastic and metal materials reused.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey also mentioned parish councils. That is well outside my responsibilities. However, he will have noticed that two of the Ministers of State in the Department represent London seats and may be interested in the arguments, if not in the conclusions, about the need for parish councils in the London area.

The right hon. Member for Swanage, West made some interesting remarks.

Mr. Alan Williams: It is Swansea.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I apologise. The right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) seemed to be under the misapprehension that Singapore is a social society. In fact, it is a testament to the success of fr enterprise. To see how a socialist society deals with t environment, he should look at eastern Europe, fro which he would draw very different conclusions. Fo years of state socialism behind the iron curtain have l those countries in a state of environmental catastrophe. will require at least the next 40 years to clean them up, a to undo the ravages of too great a reliance upon cent command and control planning.

The right hon. Member for Swansea, West alleged th the presumption in favour of development was introduc by my right hon. Friend the Member for Cirencester a Tewkesbury (Mr. Ridley). That is not the case as th principle has underlined the modern planning system sin 1949, when it was put forward in a circular issued by t Labour Government.

The principle simply means that a local authority mu demonstrate good reason for refusing development cannot comment upon individual planning cas especially as the ones concerned are in the Principali However, those responsible will doubtless read the ho Gentleman's remarks.

I cannot let a debate like this end without mention dogs—not because I think that that subject has not be adequately debated in the past, but because the lack control of dogs has a most unfortunate impact on the lo environment. I am glad that we finally have in plac system which promises to deal directly with the problem stray dogs, and to enforce the requirement that a dog i public place must wear a collar and identification tag. T duty of enforcement will be discharged by district counc which are in a much better position to do so than county councils or the police.

The Home Office has also made available a grea range of strengthened byelaws to deal with stray do Officials in my Department are holding a series of meeti with people interested in dogs, and the problems that t cause, to work out details of what could be called the d package for introduction by April 1992. Once that is place, it will be a big step forward, will introduce a grea sense of responsibility for dog owners, and will help to d with the undoubted environmental problems that re from irresponsible dog ownership.

My hon. Friend's motion also mentions recycling. I tribute to the wide range of local authorities, voluntary and industrial groups, which are implement our policy to improve our recycling performance. We h a target of recycling half of the household waste that possible to recycle by the end of the century. That requ partnership between all concerned.

Increasingly, facilities are being provided for recycling of materials such as glass, aluminium, s paper and textiles. I am glad that supermarkets beginning to provide facilities for recycling pla shopping bags. We must never forget the need not sim to collect recyclable materials, but to ensure that there demand for them. In other words, we must balance supply and demand for those materials. Consider damage was done to the cause of recycling by temporary glut of low-grade waste paper caused by tremendous enthusiasm to collect newspapers without corresponding adequate means of using them to pro new paper. I am glad that it looks as though at least

new large newsprint mill will come on stream soon, making use of this paper and bringing about the balance that is required.

Everyone has a part to play in stimulating demand for recycled goods. My Department uses 100 per cent. recycled paper in all its correspondence. I do not believe that the House of Commons does that yet, so I hope that hon. Members will follow the lead of my Department in using recycled materials whenever possible.

Mr. Tony Banks: There is some available.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I look forward to receiving the hon. Gentleman's letters on recycled paper.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Will the Minister clarify a point? Last year, I asked one of his colleagues about this and was given to understand that the Department uses offcuts rather than properly recycled paper. Is that still the case, and if so, will the Department soon have properly recycled paper?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The use of offcuts is legitimate, because it is paper that would otherwise have been wasted. However, the hon. Gentleman puts his finger on an issue —the problem of defining exactly what recycled paper is. Another problem is that a different percentage of recycled fibres is used in making paper. That is one reason why it is unwise to use fiscal measures to promote the use of recycled paper. In deciding, for example, to relieve recycled paper of VAT, one would have to decide what constitutes recycled paper and in so doing make a number of difficult and arbitrary decisions. The best way forward is to promote the use of recycled paper wherever we can. I agree that post-consumer recycled paper is preferable, but the use of offcuts is also valid.

We need to mobilise public enthusiasm more generally in pursuit of environmental aims, not just by increasing public access to information but by improved labelling. Every day, customers and consumers making purchasers in shops make millions of environmental decisions. We want those decisions to be better informed, so we are working out a scheme for labelling products with environmental information. We should like to take this forward with our partner countries in Europe, in the interests of free trade. If that does not prove possible, or if matters become too delayed, we shall consider a national scheme. Those environmental labels will be awarded on the basis of a number of criteria, including the use of recycled materials in the product, the potential for recycling the materials, and the packaging of the product.

My hon. Friend the Member for Romford spoke with authority about air pollution, which he emphasised was, in his experience, of central importance if we are to improve the quality of our urban environment. He will recognise that the types of pollution with which we have to deal are different from that which afflicted us when he first entered Parliament. That was in the last days of the smog problem, which was effectively resolved by earlier legislation. That problem has now been replaced by greater concern about different kinds of gases—sulphur compounds, oxides of nitrogen and low-level ozone. I assure him that these concerns were very much to the fore when we drew up the White Paper on the environment and during the passage of the Environmental Protection Act.

During the discussions on the Bill, all sides agreed that a decisive step forward must be taken by introducing tighter regulation over emissions, not just to the air but to land and water. That takes the form of our system of integrated pollution control which will extend and clarify the controls that are now exercised by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution. In future, we shall require the use of best available techniques not entailing excessive cost to maximise our control over pollution and to render emissions to the air and other media harmless and inoffensive.

We are determined to require new plant and equipment in Britain to use the very best control techniques available anywhere in the world. Under the system of integrated pollution control, authorisations will be required before certain industrial processes can begin. Again, the public will be able to take action in the courts for contravention of any condition. For the first time the public will be given full details of the proposed pollution controls and will be invited to comment on them. Furthermore, they will have access to local authority offices in which will be held the details of the control conditions imposed on those industries and the monitoring data, showing how well they are complying with them. Similar controls will be enforced by local authorities over the so-called part B processes —the less potentially polluting processes and industries.

My hon. Friend wisely coupled his remarks about air pollution with the cost implications. We must never forget that higher environmental standards do not come cheap. We are, therefore, putting in place by means of the Environmental Protection Act a cost recovery system, which is the embodiment of the "polluter pays" principle. It will enable Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution and local authorities to recover the cost of administration, enforcement and regulation direct from the industries. That will be a new source of revenue for the regulators, which will ensure that the costs are not simply thrown on to the general taxpayer and chargepayer.

In the water industry, too, the principle is being carried forward of the separation of the regulator from the operator. The cost of the regulator will increasingly fall on the regulated—again, the "polluter pays" principle. The public are rightly requiring ever-higher standards of water purity and treatment. It is only right, therefore, that they should see those higher standards coming through in the form of higher costs, which ultimately must be borne by us all. A virtue of the Water Act 1989 is that it brings transparency to the system of enforcement and cost.

My hon. Friend the Member for Romford said that drinking water quality is generally high and gave his own water company as an example. I confirm and endorse his remarks. The new regime established by the Water Act will ensure, for the first time, an effective system of regulating drinking water quality for which there are appropriate back-up powers. It sets out precise standards for drinking water that must be attained and specifies in detail the monitoring that must be carried out. Again, the results are publicly available. The new drinking water inspectorate that was set up in my Department at the start of this year ensures that water companies comply with the new statutory duties. Local authorities, too, have a significant part to play, and the Water Act places a duty on them to keep themselves informed about the quality and sufficiency of water supplies in their areas.

My hon. Friend the Member for Romford mentioned the need for unpolluted beaches and inshore waters. He has an inland constituency, whereas my constituency has several miles of beach. I, too, am anxious to improve the

[Mr. Heathcoat-Amory]

quality of our inshore waters. The controls on litter have an important role, and they will apply in those areas. We must recognise that much litter comes not from people dropping it on beaches but by its being washed up from other sources; some of it originates from ships. It is not only unsightly but is a health hazard to marine life such as seals and sea birds.

There is an international agreement to prohibit the dumping of all plastics and most forms of garbage close to the coast. The Government have introduced regulations that make it an offence for any yacht or commercial vessel to dispose of such waste in the sea.

That is reinforced by a public information and publicity campaign undertaken by the Department of Transport.

Mr. Tony Banks: It is highly desirable that dumping inshore and on the high seas should be made illegal. It is one thing to pass a measure saying that it is illegal but another to enforce it. Will the Minister say—I accept that it is not his direct departmental responsibility—what enhanced enforcement powers are being taken to ensure that irresponsible people do not continue to pollute our coastal waters?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The hon. Gentleman makes a fair point: regulation is one thing, but enforcement is important. It is difficult to know what is happening on board a ship many miles off the coast. I invite members of the public on shore or on vessels to report breaches of the regulations. The regional offices of the Department of Transport rely on information from the public and from crew members to help to enforce the regulations.

I reassure the hon. Member for Newham, North-West that port authorities are paying attention to the regulations. Recently, I visited Bristol port authority, where I saw facilities and provision for receiving waste from ships when they dock. Ships and boats of all sizes have no excuse for tipping their rubbish overboard rather than taking it into harbour and disposing of it responsibly.

Mr. Neubert: My hon. Friend has responded to a series of points made in the debate, but he omitted to refer to graffiti, which was mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Arbuthnot). I hope that my hon. Friend agrees that the defacing of buildings, walls and bridges by graffiti is as much a detraction from amenities as are litter and refuse. The code of practice does not appear to mention it, but will there be any action to deal with that modern phenomenon?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Graffiti was not overlooked in our discussions about litter during the passage of the Environmental Protection Bill or when we drew up the code of practice. We reached the conclusion, however, that it is a different sort of problem. It would not be altogether fair to require the victims of graffiti to keep their buildings free of it. To place an expensive obligation on the victim approaches the problem in the wrong way.

We prefer to draw to the attention of the enforcement authorities and the courts the means that already exist to take action against that form of vandalism. For example, section 1 of the Criminal Damage Act 1971 makes it an offence, punishable by up to 10 years' imprisonment, to damage, recklessly or intentionally, any property belonging to another. Under section 3 of the Act it is an offence to possess anything with the intent to destroy damage property. The law is already extremely tou when dealing with that nuisance and vandalism.

It is also important to emphasise the need incorporate in designs the means of preventing or reduc graffiti damage. I have seen new materials and new ty of surface that are available to those designing shopping town centres that are resistant to spray paint or mak easier to remove. A small investment in anti-graf measures can bring a considerable return in terms of environment. A graffiti-free part of town generally st that way, whereas when a potential vandal sees a pl already covered in graffiti it almost invites him to appe his signature to it.

I assure my hon. Friends that the omission of graf from the code of practice does not mean that we insensible to that form of environmental irresponsibil

I am grateful to all hon. Members who have spoke am not, of course, formally replying to the debate, contributing to it. If, during the remainder of the deba other points are made which are my responsibility, I sh ensure that they are considered and responded to wh appropriate.

1.32 pm

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): I, too, should like express my congratulations to the hon. Member Romford (Mr. Neubert) on his success in coming first the ballot and on presenting a wide-ranging motion t enables us to discuss not just the local environment that of the world. When John Wesley undertook his sea for souls in the 18th century, he said:

"I look upon all the world as my parish."

That applies even more so today as we grapple w problems to ensure that our local communities are dec places in which to live.

The motion gives us the opportunity to deal with matters from the stratosphere to the street. It is howev a sad commentary on eleven and a half years of To government that a Tory Member has had to introduc motion that pleads for advances in the quality of life covers just about everything. In that sense, it is commentary on what J. K. Galbraith so long a described as the presence of "private opulence" w "public squalor". In the 1980s, that public squalor become worse because the Government have not given local environment the priority that it deserves.

Mr. Neubert *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Griffiths: The hon. Member for Romford shal his head in disagreement. However, we are debating motion today and it pleads for advances in the quality life.

Mr. Neubert: I deliberately tabled a motion that did rise to the stratosphere as I wanted to emphasise the lo environment. The hon. Member for Bridgend (M Griffiths) has made political points about the motion. I the local authorities that have received the most gra from the Government in recent years which have m street cleaning their lowest priority.

Mr. Griffiths: The hon. Gentleman says that the mot deals not with the stratosphere but with the lo

environment. However, the hon. Gentleman's plea for clean air involves issues that, if they were discussed in one debate, would not have been dealt with in every aspect.

One of the Government's problems in the past decade is illustrated by a tautology in the motion. It calls on the Government to act

"through the necessary minimum regulation".

Any good English teacher would say that the phrase "necessary regulation" is sufficient and that there is no need to use the word "minimum" as well. The wording shows the state of mind of the hon. Member for Romford and of his party. The Government do not want to become closely involved, which contrasts with the attitude taken in other countries. The United States is a good example. If the capitalist economy has worked fully and freely anywhere, it is in the United States, yet there are strict regulatory controls there on all aspects not only of industrial production but of the conduct of commerce and of high finance. We do not need adjectives such as "minimum" to govern our approach to the local environment. As other hon. Members have already stressed, the local environment is important to individuals. People write to us at far greater length and on many more aspects of the local environment than on the matters of great moment that we often discuss here.

Clean air is not merely relevant to a debate on the local environment. When we discuss the air that we breathe, whether in the House of Commons, in London or in our constituencies, why is it important to consider the international implications? A few simply examples will show that it is important to take international considerations into account. Chernobyl showed just how important it is that we should have an international dimension to our thoughts about clean air and a decent environment. In some parts of England and Wales, the farmland is still so contaminated that the livestock cannot be sold in the marketplace.

Let us think for a moment that acid rain. We have heard this morning about the failure of the Soviet-type system to produce a clean industrial environment and regulate pollution. Incidentally, the Labour party has never claimed that it wants to ape the Soviet system, so comparisons are wholly unnecessary. Britain is often described as the dirty man of Europe because of the acid rain that we caused to fall on Scandinavian countries but sometimes wind and weather change, and when that happens, we have our own problems.

The hon. Member for Romford described how when he was a younger man, new to the House, great success was achieved in dealing with the problem of smog. That was good, but it was perhaps easier to tackle smog because one could see it—or, rather, one could not see beyond one's nose when one was in it. Many of the threats to clean air today are not so easily seen. That is why it is crucial that we should focus on the problems of acid rain and low-level ozone which are the more insidious because they cannot be seen.

As in so many matters, the quarrel between the Opposition and the Government centres on urgency and on the pace of change. We believe that we should espouse the precautionary principle. If there is an element of doubt about the harmful effects of a practice or substance, we should immediately take steps to investigate it. If it is proved that there is no cause for consternation, the practice can be resumed or the substance deemed safe. That is better than ruling out action on the grounds that there is not sufficient evidence. If one waits for evidence to appear, it may be too late to act. It is better to take an urgent look at what is happening if there are doubts about it.

The two major causes of air pollution are the production of energy and the vehicles on our roads. We could make tremendous progress if only we would undertake a full flue gas desulphurisation programme instead of relying on the possible use of low-sulphur coal. Supplies of low-sulphur coal are not necessarily guaranteed. Most of it will have to be imported and the price could prove prohibitive. In a short time, gas desulphurisation could look like a cheap option.

The Labour Government of the 1990s will set up an energy efficiency agency charged with dealing with precisely those matters. We could then reduce significantly our carbon dioxide emissions, a third of which come from power stations. We could also reduce significantly our sulphur dioxide emissions, 70 per cent. of which come from power stations, and one third of our nitrogen oxide emissions, which also come from power stations. All that would help to contribute towards clean air in this country. Combined heat and power schemes, especially those that utilise waste, must also be considered and promoted with the utmost vigour.

I do not want to dwell for too long on transport because many hon. Members have underlined the problem of air pollution and also the danger from cars and lorries on our overcrowded roads, particularly in city centres. However, large lorries can be just as dangerous on narrow rural roads.

Eighteen per cent. of our carbon dioxide, amounting to 28 million tonnes, comes from vehicle pollution. The more that we can do to introduce an effective public transport network in which buses, railways and underground systems are all considered together, the better. Unfortunately transport deregulation has not helped. Large cities now find it difficult to plan large integrated transport systems. For example, since deregulation in Newcastle it has proved difficult for transport schemes like the Metro to link up with the bus services. The result is that huge traffic jams involving minibuses are blocking bridges across the River Tyne. We must pay more attention to public transport investment and to our rail services. We must get the long distance lorries off our roads. We must promote intermodal freight so that containers can be moved off trains straight on to lorries so that the lorries make only local journeys.

Although we need roads where they will provide a direct benefit to the community, some of our plans for the 1,500 miles of motorway and trunk roads must be reconsidered to discover whether they are really necessary. Reference has already been made to the controversy over Oxleas woods. There is a united approach among the local hon. Members concerned about how that problem should be tackled to stop the desecration of that ancient woodland. However, there are similar examples of concern around the country. People are up in arms about the impact on their local environment. That is why it is important to have a proper assessment of the environmental impact of road schemes. It is estimated that 162 sites of special scientific interest would be damaged if all those schemes went ahead. On that basis alone, we should reconsider what we are doing in that massive programme.

[Mr. Griffiths]

Another major factor that produces much justifiable local outcry is the use of inefficient incinerators. It has been a problem in trying to get efficient combined heat and power systems that incinerate waste to work successfully. Emissions from inefficient incinerators have been bad for local communities. We now have European Community standards, but none of the 35 incinerators yet complies with those standards. They have until 1996 to do so. I hope that the Government will give those who run such incinerators—often local authorities—extra financial help to meet the standards before 1996. From the end of this month new incinerators will have to meet those standards. That is good news for members of the public who have often been bedevilled by incineration.

Hon. Members have referred to noise pollution. Hon. Members are often plunged into neighbourhood disputes, particularly when flats are involved. There are several lessons to be learnt. In addition to moves that are already being made to improve heat and noise insulation—the two often go together—there is still more to be done in respect of new houses and the renovation of old properties. We need new standards and proper Government implementation of them. We need also the financial carrot to help people, in particular those who are less well off, to afford to implement the new standards that will benefit everybody.

We also need environmental health officers to implement the law. At the moment, a noise dispute between neighbours can be settled only by the complainant going to court. Neither the police nor environmental health officers can become directly involved. Also, there are difficulties in placing proper monitoring equipment at the right time of day. Noise often happens at 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning. One will not get environmental health officers at that time because of local authorities' difficulties in financing their budgets. The Government should give environmental health officers the power to intervene in neighbourhood noise disputes.

On noise pollution that is caused by industrial activities, the "polluter pays" principle should be applied, again under Government regulation so that the rules are clear. Factories or rail shunting yards that cause noise problems should be responsible for providing the noise insulation that neighbours require.

Much has been said about pollution of our rivers and beaches, and reference has been made to the standard of our tap water. There is a certain complacency among Conservative Members. Modern pollution problems are more insidious and are often more difficult to track than the old ones were. The lead problem was known for years and lead piping has been progressively replaced. We now know the possible links between aluminium and pre-senile dementia. Polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, which are linked to cancer, are to be found in the coal tar lining of many of the older water supply pipes. Pesticide residues are raising problems in relation to the quality of our drinking water and because of the nitrates that pollute them. We must deal with the many problems relating to the intensification methods used in agriculture. The Government are taking steps to deal with the nitrate-sensitive problems, but once again they are acting too slowly, not enough of the difficulties have been identified and the measures taken have not b enough to ensure that there is no abuse through nitrate fertilisers.

Problems relating to the proper disposal waste have not been adequately tackled. Far discharge variations are being allowed, and mor in five sewage works are unable to stay dispensations they have been given. It is no won have problems with the cryptosporidium para causes gastroenteritis. Some large scale outbr been detected, but one wonders about incidence outbreaks have not been so serious and conseq problem has not been identified.

As the Minister mentioned, there is a drin inspectorate in the Department of the Environm is hard pressed and has only sufficient staff to water companies' own monitoring results. The believe there is a case for creating a totally in drinking water inspectorate, within a wider envi protection executive, which would be properly able to pursue those matters much more freely. might be said about the quality of our water, worried about it.

Mr. Arbuthnot: As we tot up the cost of the n party manifesto, it would be helpful if the hon. said how much that scheme would cost and wh is a Labour party commitment to spend mone

Mr. Griffiths: If we were to adopt the "poll principle—the Minister referred to exampl Government introducing such systems—many measures would be self-financing. One of the gr in the past has been that we have let industry get polluting our environment. An article in today *Mail*, which serves a substantial part of Wales, Kent company called, I think, "Clean Drain", o south Wales, which dumped 3,000 tonnes of wa through a drain into the River Taff. The pollu the river's total fish stock of over 12,000. I am say that the court fined the company £70,000. involving the "polluter pays" principle wou many of the schemes to which the hon. Mem Many of the issues are governed by European C regulations, which means that other coun obligations similar to ours. It should be our duty through our elected Members of the European and through direct Government representati Commission, that the regulations are properly in the other countries. There need be no disad our country. While an element of cost is bo involved, both for the Government and authorities, much of it will be recouped by "polluter pays" principle.

I wish now to refer to our beaches and insh One in four of our designated beaches do no European Community standards for pollution from sewage. I have to admit that both L Conservative Governments have dragged their issue. However, the Conservative Government more culpable because the bathing water dir approved in 1976, to come fully into operatio

When the Labour Government left p Department of the Environment had prepared the criteria to govern beaches in the United When this Government came to power, I under

they designated only 27 beaches in England and Scotland, and none in Northern Ireland and Wales, as coming within the terms of the directive. The Minister will no doubt correct me if that is wrong. There was uproar in the European Community and among the directly elected British Members of the European Parliament, of which I was one. The Government were threatened with being taken before the European Court of Justice, and in the 1980s they produced a revised list of almost 400 beaches that came within the terms of the directive. Although 1986 was the date on which the directive's terms should have been fully met, it was only in that year that the Government finally made a proper designation of beaches.

Britain is currently before the European Court of Justice because the Government envisage the directive being met in about 1995, in most cases. It is possible that the European Court will decide that, given the original 10-year time scale for the directive, the Government will have to speed up the process. Legally, compliance is the Government's responsibility, although in practice the water companies will have to ensure that the standards in the directive are met.

The Department recently appealed to the private individual to report examples of ships dumping waste or sewage at sea. As my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) said, more than that is needed, and in particular there should be a proper inspectorate. One of the great failings of the Government has been a lack of the proper inspection to ensure compliance with existing regulations. For example, the issue of street parking was raised by a number of hon. Members including the hon. Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley). Every week in my constituency I receive complaints about motorists parking illegally. I contact the police, the traffic wardens, and the local authority, but they all say that although they are trying their best, they do not have sufficient staff to enforce the parking restrictions and to ensure that motorists are aware that if they park illegally they will be fined. If there are proper inspections and the law is enforced, and if people know that if they do not respect the law it is more than likely they will be caught, that will help to improve the local environment.

Mr. Jessel: The hon. Gentleman is making an interesting and important speech, and of course he has the right to continue. However, he may forgive me if I point out that he has already been speaking longer than the Minister, and three other hon. Members hope to catch Mr. Deputy Speaker's eye.

Mr. Griffiths: I do not want to get into a dispute with the hon. Gentleman, but I have been on my feet for 32 minutes, and the Minister spoke for 38 minutes. It was my intention to conclude in six minutes' time, at 10 minutes past 2 o'clock at the latest—and perhaps earlier.

A number of hon. Members, including my right hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams), pointed out that a Government Department often plays more than one role, which may be seen by the public to prejudice a particular planning application which could have a significant impact on a locality and which is the subject of almost unanimous local opposition.

Hon. Members may have noticed that I excused myself from the debate for a few minutes this morning, during the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West. I was asked to go to the phone to speak to a lady calling from Huntingdon who had hoped to spea the Prime Minister, thinking that he might be participa in this debate. She had read about it in *The Independ* thought that it was extremely important, and, as it wa the behest of a Conservative Member, imagined that Prime Minister would be taking part.

The issue that the lady wanted to raise was a plan application for 111 houses on Spring comm Apparently, Baroness Blatch, who is a trustee of common, was recently elevated to the position Under-Secretary of State at the Department of Environment. The Prime Minister's predecessor as Member for Huntingdon, Lord Renton, who held the for 45 years, has written to Baroness Blatch to seek undertaking about the way in which the application wi dealt with. The lady hoped that the Prime Minister, wh view she has not yet been able to ascertain, will supp those campaigning to save Spring common. It seems li from the remarks of the hon. Member for Eltham Baroness Blatch will withdraw from any consideratio her Department of the Spring common application, there should surely be a review of the way in which Department of the Environment, Welsh Office Scottish Office handle planning applications.

Over the past few years, we have seen an increas opencast mining, much to the consternation of pe living near the sites of that activity. Labour is commi to maintaining strict control of it and to implementing Flowers report, which will limit extractions to 3 mil tonnes less than the current figure. That subject has arisen in the debate, so I wanted to mention it now.

I did not get around to mentioning either the ques of waste from heat, which, with recycling, is an impor way of dealing with domestic refuse, and should be co properly by comparison with keeping and manag landfill sites.

When the Companies Bill was going through House, the Government rejected environmental audits the United States, companies such as Procter and Gam produce a company policy, entitled "In Partnership W Our Environment", and they take significant steps reduce the amount of packaging and to ensure that it be either re-used or recycled. That is a positive comp strategy. We need a similar strategy in Britain. We need Government to encourage stronger action and m urgency and less of the voluntary or persuasive appro which, frankly, is not good enough.

2.10 pm

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): I am grateful to hon. Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths) for his court as it was apparent from the impressive pile of notes in fr of him that he could have continued. His speech especially interesting on the important subjects of wa and air. I remind him that since the Clean Air Acts w introduced under successive Governments there have b great improvements in the quality of air in Londo remember the smog which used to pollute us in the days. We no longer see that.

I join in warmly congratulating my hon. Friend Member for Romford (Mr. Neubert) on introducing debate and giving us this opportunity. I wish that I co have been present throughout the debate, but I ha previous engagement with my dentist—I should m

[Mr. Toby Jessel]

rather have been here so that I could have heard the whole of the debate. I look forward to reading the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Romford.

I hope that when my hon. Friend refers in his motion to "reduced noise levels" he does not mean the noise made by military bands, which are trained in my constituency at the Royal Military School of Music, Kneller Hall, with which he had some association with last year, when he was a Minister with responsibility for the Army. As a musician, he will know that the noise that they produce is splendid, and that their high standard of excellence is the envy of the entire world. They contribute to the quality of life, to which he also referred in his motion.

The River Thames loops around my constituency and two-thirds of my constituents live within one mile of the river. They greatly treasure the Thames as an amenity, and as a facet of their lives. They are well aware that it is not only important to people in Twickenham, Teddington, the Hamptons, and Wickham, but to greater London as a whole.

My hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley)—a neighbouring constituency—made a major contribution when he campaigned in the mid-1980s against the lead weights used by fishermen, which endangered swans. A large number of swans have now come back to the River Thames. Opposite Hampton, in my constituency, they are now to be seen in large numbers every day in the park, where they are fed by children and others who live in the neighbourhood.

I am worried about the quality of water in the River Thames because of two new factors. First, recent hot summers and low rainfall have led to drought, so that most of the water in the river has to be taken out upstream to provide enough for the water supply, which means that there is not enough water flowing downstream. To maintain a reasonably quantity of water in the river, the lock at Teddington has to be closed, which turns the River Thames above the lock into a stagnant pond. The improvement that we have seen in the river in recent years, which means that salmon have been found as far upstream as Molesey lock, is thus being jeopardised. At the end of his speech, my hon. Friend the Minister said that if points were made in the debate to which he could not reply, he would take account of them, so I ask him to look into both that and at the toxicity of the River Thames.

I am glad to see that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales has come into the Chamber, not only because he was a Minister at the Department of the Environment but because of his undoubted concern for rivers in Wales. Too much poisonous matter is still going into our rivers. At Hampton Court, one sometimes sees bubbles in the water coming out of the River Mole, a tributary of the Thames. I suspect that that comes from a car wash a little upstream.

Will the Government look most carefully at the issue of discharges from car washes into rivers? In drought conditions, we are told to save water and forbidden to water shrubs and plants in our gardens because of the water shortage. Yet car washes seem to go on without any constraint. It is wrong, and nonsense, that just because they are commercial activities and part of trade, they can continue to use copious quantities of water, mixed with pollutants which then go into rivers. The are given too much autonomy in decidin curbs.

Will my hon. Friend the Minister mak Department to see what can be d conditions, if we have fine summers like t past, to curb the use of car washes so th be given to allowing people to water pla their gardens?

2.16 pm

Mr. David Bellotti (Eastbourne): I Member for Romford (Mr. Neubert) important issue. I have a number of con pollution of the beaches and the constituency which I guess is similar seaside towns. We were awarded a blue fl was tested, but some groups suggested t not taken along the whole length of the b us with the worst of all worlds. If our bea we should like to take action because we and for the good of our economy mus However, if the beaches are not polluted statement so that fringe groups cannot m the local economy. The Government mus in this matter and ensure that testing for beaches is clear and respected by all, so t understood. We need a great deal more truth.

Our local environment has a particul which I hope the Minister will talk to his Department of Transport. One of the gr the pollution caused by the inability to one part of the constituency to another. T to the problem, the Hampden Pa Unfortunately, local government doe financial capacity to introduce this relief have the busiest level crossing in the queues of people have to wait for hou across the constituency. This causes industry and causes concern to local peo it pollutes the environment because disgorging fumes. Unless the Departm encourages local government to spend problem will not be resolved.

The hon. Member for Romford refer Department of Transport, as part of it main roads in my constituency, has bu Unfortunately, it did not use the materi Minister referred—that deters people graffiti on the walls. The underpass regularly redecorated, but the materi Department of Transport have no effect I hope that the Minister will encourage o to think carefully about using materials t less graffiti in our towns and villages.

The hon. Member for Newham, Banks) referred to complaints about n who come to his surgeries. A number of come to my surgery at Eastbourne have noise. I took up their complaint with the environmental health department. It is not have the financial resources to em

with the matter. Furthermore, the legislation does not help the authority as much as it should. I hope that the Minister will consider what he can do about the problem.

Eastbourne park is an area of considerable beauty, but the pressure to develop it is considerable. The Minister and the Government should consider whether they favour the developers or the preservation of the local environment. One always has to perform a balancing act, but we want Eastbourne park to be preserved. We hope that in that case, and in similar areas throughout the United Kingdom, the Minister will always favour the preservation of the environment.

Many of my constituents are concerned about the pollution caused by the development of the Crumbles in Eastbourne. The developers were not required—because it was felt that it would not be successful—to provide alternative access from the main highways. Some of my constituents have to put up with large numbers of lorries going down their residential roads to reach the site. The Government must make it clear that when developers cause pollution, whether it be noise pollution or other forms, they must put it right. If the Government believe in the "polluter pays" principle, they should ensure that developers do not allow pollution to be caused by their developments.

The motion is about quality of life. Many of my constituents believe that the quality of life has not improved in recent years. They have sent me here to give the message to the Government that they must do something to improve it.

2.22 pm

Mr. James Arbuthnot (Wanstead and Woodford): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Romford (Mr. Neubert) on securing the debate. In one well-worded motion he has captured the theme of the 1990s and beyond. He highlighted the areas on which we must concentrate in future years. In particular, he highlighted the fact that we must try to improve the quality of our life.

I thank the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Bellotti) and my hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) for their brevity as well as for their interesting speeches. They have cut short their speeches to allow me a little time in which to speak.

The widely worded motion allowed hon. Members to cover many aspects of the quality of life. My hon. Friend the Member for Romford referred to our historic heritage, of which we are becoming more and more aware. One problem caused by increasing prosperity is that people have more leisure time, and they spend more time visiting historic sites. Pressure on our beautiful sites has become intense. It is difficult to know how to cope with the increasing number of visitors to the Lake district, to our cathedrals and to Epping forest. Moreover, how do we cope with visitors to Stonehenge? If we try to preserve Stonehenge from being worn away by fencing it off completely so that no one can get near the site, are we not destroying its point? Yet what choice do we have? I have no answer to that problem, and I suspect that it will be difficult to find one, but it will become increasingly important to do so.

I welcome what the Government have done this year to improve the environment. The Environmental Protection Act 1990 was an extremely important step forward and the White Paper published in the summer was an excellent addition. Those measures set out a programme committed action to improve the environmer decade. In that respect, my hon. Friend the M South Hams (Mr. Steen) reminded us environment is, for the moment, a fashionabl believe that it will remain fashionable and will r the rest of my life. As the planet becomes mor the pressures on its resources increase, the spac to us reduces and the stresses of living cheek b crowded world and at a frenetic pace increas have to control and husband the resources of ever more carefully.

I welcome what the Government are doing, b when I intervened on my hon. Friend the M Romford, and as he said when he interven Minister, the White Paper does not appear t graffiti. It may seem a small subject, but in my co it is extremely important. It not only makes bui and dirty, but creates an impression of negl society not caring about appearances. In permeates other areas of life. I do not want to far, but one could suggest that graffiti left on bu walls creates an air of lawlessness and of society interested in upholding its laws or values.

The consequences of that impression dangerous and far reaching. Graffiti tends to rabbits, and if something has been written o tends to encourage people and to remind them they can write on walls and, secondly, that tha wall to write on. The answer to graffiti must be it as quickly as possible. The quicker it is remov likely it is to attract more, and the more like discourage the vandal in the first place.

Redbridge council has done what it can graffiti on council property as quickly as possib a reward of £250 to anyone who gives informati to the arrest and conviction of a vandal. Pu context, it costs the council £100,000 a year to the problem of graffiti, which could be spent social services, increased lighting, improv collection, or other important areas of its respo is not available because of people who mistaken themselves artists, but are vandals. Removal would be made easier if architects, plan decorators became aware of the paint that mal easy to wash off.

Litter is another problem that grows if left al sees a sofa discarded in the street, the chance there will be a mattress nearby, possibly a three- and an occasional table. To some extent, the p such bulky refuse has been reduced by the intro civic amenity sites, but the smaller refuse proble remains.

The Government have introduced litter notices against the owners of commercial fron regularly fail to keep their frontage clean. Tha should be extended to this country. In some countries it is obligatory for householders a commercial enterprises to keep the frontages buildings clean of litter.

If such a practice was introduced here it wo that we had a new army of litter collecters— population. That would have to lead to a cleane however badly that new army performed its task also encourage a new sense of community becau would have to get together, particularly those

[Mr. James Arbuthnot]

blocks of flats, to arrange how to keep the frontages of their buildings clean. Most important, it would bring home to everyone a point that they have so far appeared to evade: that litter is a problem——

It being half-past Two o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

Ordered,

That European Community Document No. 8182/90, relating to the draft General Budget of the European Communities for 1991, shall not stand referred to European Standing Committee C.—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

Ordered,

That European Community Document No. 9431/90, relating to political union, shall not stand referred to European Standing Committee C.—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at the sitting on Tuesday 4th December, if proceedings on the Motion in the name of Mr. Chancellor of the Exchequer relating to the draft European Community Budget for 1991 have not been previously disposed of, Mr. Speaker shall at Seven o'clock put the Question already proposed from the Chair, and, if that Question is for the Amendment of the said Motion, then put forthwith the Main Question or the Main Question, as amended.—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

Walsall District General H

Motion made, and Question proposed, T
do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

2.30 pm

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): I
the opportunity to raise a matter which I
on 3 July last year when a different Minis
subject of the debate is the district general
referred to as the Manor, in my borough,
with Goscote hospital, is the subject of
trust application.

On the last occasion I said that various
including the British Medical Associa
Consultants Committee and the Royal Col
were vigorously opposed to opting out. I a
any of those organisations has changed
slightest. With a new Prime Minister, how
that much of what would be rightly
Thatcherite policies will be modified.
proposal is one such test. I know that the
that hospitals are not opting out of the Hea
formal designation of the proposal relates t
to be a self-governing trust, but the pr
referred to as opting out.

If the opting out proposals are intended
can only reach the conclusion that the s
viewpoint will be taken on the Health Se
matters as has been taken for the past 1
there being a new person at the top. I unde
will be a statement next Tuesday about the
we shall wait and see.

The applications from the Manor and
out have been approved by the West Mi
health authority. It will be up to the Secreta
yes or no. On 17 September I responde
invitation to comment on the applica
hospitals to become self-governing. That
described as a consultation process. I w
formal objection to the applications an
whether what was taking place could be
genuine consultation exercise aimed at as
on the proposals or whether the matter h
upon already and the consultation exerci
charade.

I have since asked whether the results of
exercise on the two hospitals could be pu
The reply to my parliamentary question w
can only assume that the reason for
response is that the exercise was meaningles
that was practised in eastern Europe until

All along, the Government have refused
to be held before opting out occurs. It is in
as I have said before, that a ballot is
schools can opt out and before council acco
be sold to private landlords. Why should
held before the self-governing trusts are ap
reason—which is not the reason that the M
give today—is that Health Ministers kn
ballot, whether in my borough or elsewher
overwhelming objection to the applicatio

A formal application has been ma
hospitals to become trusts. The prospec
have chosen the words carefully—that the
and preferences of the local population wi

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this House

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says—and I
ds, opinions
e recognised.

It says that it will be essential that local views are canvassed to ensure that future developments are responsive to local preferences. It all sounds very good——

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Stephen Dorrell): It is.

Mr. Winnick: If it is all very good, what does the Minister think of the reaction of the local health authority, the manager of which drew up the prospectus for the trust? The results of a household postal referendum carried out by the local authority showed an overwhelming rejection of the proposal. Everyone in the borough was given the opportunity to express his or her view by the local authority. As my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, South (Mr. George) knows, a fair summary of the two options was given.

The Minister may say, "People were of the view that it was a question of opting out of the National Health Service." In fact, the local health authority agreed that the summary was fair in setting out the arguments for and against the Manor and the Goscote becoming a trust. The result of the referendum was that 27,639 peope were opposed to opting out and only 6,004 were in favour. That is a pretty large majority, although the general manager of the local health authority said that it meant that only about 35 per cent. of people participated. In 1989, 35·9 per cent. of voters participated in the Euro-elections and in 1984 the figure was under 32 per cent. The referendum was not by any means a bad response and the manager's argument was weak. There is no doubt that if the vote had gone the other way, and if there had been overwhelming approval for the application for a self-governing trust, we should not have heard any criticism about the allegedly small number who responded.

By a majority vote, the local health authority decided to ignore the referendum. That did not show much recognition of the needs, opinions and preferences of the local population. The only ballot that I know of which was actually allowed by the health authority involved the consultants. At the Manor hospital, 30 consultants were opposed to opting out and 11 were in favour, despite strenuous canvassing by those who were promoting the trust. The unions at the two hospitals organised a ballot. They were not given much encouragement and it was difficult for them to carry out the ballot, but no one has suggested that it was not a fair vote. Of the staff at the hospitals, 401 opposed the trust and 94 were in favour of it. The Royal College of Nursing members held a ballot and, again, there was overwhelming rejection at the Manor and Goscote hospitals.

It would be wrong to force through such a deeply controversial scheme in the face of such hostility from the local community and from the large majority of medical and non-medical staff at the two hospitals. When the matter came before the regional health authority, which wrongly approved the proposal, note was taken of the extent of the objections, including that of the Walsall community health council. Apparently, under this Government and their arrangements for appointing people, the views of those who live in the borough and of the staff at the hospitals are simply ignored if they do not go the Government's way.

There is considerable doubt about the financial viability of a trust. Wrong assumptions in respect of public dividend capital may well result in the postponement of capital development and investment. For example, a new maternity unit is included in the current operational capital programme of the regional health authority. that new maternity unit will come to the borou future. But there is certainly no guarantee that not be postponed indefinitely if the trust do financially viable. Instead of opting out, unnecessary gambling with the health of the lo ity that it entails, we urgently need resources fo Service in the borough.

To maximise income and stay in business, t trust will sell services for the private sector at th National Health Service patients. One of the borough—and it may or may not be justified; Minister will tell us—is that long-stay patients illnesses will be among those to be treated borough. There is certainly a great deal of unc and, in my view, justified, concern about the general.

Time and again, Ministers tell us that opt nothing to do with privatisation and that the se hospitals will remain in the National Healt accept that that is so—certainly in the first ins believe that the proposals are a half-way hous to privatisation. That is probably the best sum Government's intentions. In my view, this righ Government have no real commitment to Service. The Health Service has remained in ex 1979 because it has the overwhelming sup country—Tory and Liberal voters as well, o Labour voters. The Government cannot simp and finish off the National Health Service by Nevertheless, they have strengthened the privat kept the NHS short of funds, as well as intr opting-out proposal, which, as I have said, is house to privatisation. All those measures have at eroding and undermining the National Hea The Minister may say that that is just Labou view, but it would appear that it is also the vie number of people in the country.

There is no doubt that the proposal is deeply in the borough; I do not think that the M question that. Whenever local residents or h have been given the opportunity to vote, decisively rejected the proposal. The Minister the Secretary of State this: if the proposal is so and if it gambles, as it undoubtedly will, with t the people of the area, why go ahead with it? W with a totally doctrinaire policy which is not which is irrelevant to the health of the people? I there is a statement on Tuesday, we shall hear although I doubt it. I can only cross my finge that by next week we shall hear that the applicati rejected.

2.44 pm

Mr. Bruce George (Walsall, South) *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): hon. Gentleman have the consent of the hon. Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) and the Ministe

Mr. Winnick: Yes.

Mr. Dorrell: Yes.

Mr. George: I am grateful to my hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) for l few minutes.

[Mr. George]

For many years, we campaigned for a new district general hospital in Walsall. The hospital was opened just a few months ago at the end of that long campaign. Within days, we heard that, as a result of the Government's ideologically driven campaign, the hospital was to be removed from local control and handed over to politically motivated administrators.

The essence of the proposal has been driven ideologically from London and it has been supported locally by a handful of people, most of whom are administrators, who will benefit from the transfer of the hospital from local health authority control to the new trust. I am not suggesting that there is anything illegal about the process. However, many years ago Aneurin Bevan accused the consultants of being motivated against the Health Service. It is said that he resolved the problem by stuffing their mouths with silver or gold. It appears today that the administrators are stuffing silver and gold in their own mouths.

There is no support for the proposal locally. As my hon. Friend said, consultants, doctors, trade unions, the community health council, a survey by the *Walsall Observer* and the local referendum all show that the proposal is supported only by a minority of the local community. The consultation has been bogus. It was a frivolous act to give the impression of wide approval that does not exist. It is important that we see the results of the consultation. Let us know how many people or organisations wrote in. We would then learn why the Government want to go ahead with the proposal: a semi-privatised status which, as my hon. Friend said, is merely a transit camp to a full-blown system of privatisation, is ideologically conducive to the Government.

Ultimately the most important poll will take place in six months, a year or perhaps two years. If the Labour party is elected, I am certain that there will be genuine consultation. If the majority of the population want this nonsense to be perpetuated, I believe that we should acquiesce. However, if they are not in favour of the proposal, it should be thrown on to the rubbish heap where it belongs. It is important that our local campaign continues to expose the self-interest of those concerned. I welcome my hon. Friend's initiative in initiating this debate.

2.46 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Stephen Dorrell): The hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) speculated about the effect of the change of Prime Minister. He wondered whether the new Prime Minister would carry on what he described as the same "doctrinaire" policies as his predecessor. I am pleased to be able to assure the House that I have absolute confidence that my right hon. Friend the new Prime Minister will indeed carry on the doctrinaire commitment to the National Health Service of his predecessor. I am pleased to confirm that we shall continue the programme of reinforcing the National Health Service and providing it with growing resources. We will continue to carry through the programme of reforms of the Health Service's administration to ensure that we can secure better quality health care for the patient and better value for money for the taxpayer from the expenditure, which is growing in real terms.

The hon. Member for Walsall, North insisted on using the phrase "opting out" because he regarded the policy of the establishment of NHS trusts as a halfway house to privatisation. That is explicitly not the purpose of trust status. Any hospital or other unit which becomes an NHS trust will remain an integral part of the National Health Service.

The difference between a trust and a directly managed unit is simply one of the style and system of management of that unit within the National Health Service. The question is whether a unit is more effectively managed as a self-contained trust more responsible for its own future or whether it is better managed within the context of a local health authority that is also the purchaser of health care in that locality.

Perhaps I may begin by going into a little detail on why we have introduced the concept of trust status and what its purpose is. In any discussion of the management of the National Health Service, which is all that we are talking about, it is important to be clear about the central purpose of the National Health Service. I am very clear about that: it is to ensure that health care is available to every citizen on the basis of need, not of ability to pay. The National Health Service should exist to enable any citizen who needs it to gain access to the health care that he needs, and the process of running a hospital should be clearly secondary to the priority for NHS managers, which is to ensure that their resident population can secure the health care that they need.

That is why, after next April, the primary function of district health authorities will be defined as the purchasing of health care on behalf of their resident population rather than the running of hospitals. The traditional model of managing the Health Service can be characterised—perhaps even caricatured, but none the less informatively caricatured—by the health authority having to build a hospital, open the doors and treat the patients who came in through the doors.

The result of that policy is that the articulate and well-organised—perhaps the middle class—are the ones who have been able to get the health care that they need, and too often the needs of the inarticulate and the disorganised sections of the community have not been sufficiently met. By imposing on the purchaser authority the obligation to think about the health care needs of every resident of its area, we are consciously creating a "pressure cooker" device that is designed to ensure that the health care needs of every resident of a district are met and addressed by the health authority.

The purchaser function of the health authority is the important function within the NHS. The function of managing the hospital is, of course, important, but it is secondary to the primary purpose of ensuring that every resident and every citizen of this country has access to the health care that he or she needs. That is why I regard the process of applying for trust status and of giving trust status where we feel that the quality of management and the financial security and so forth justify it are a step forward. It distinguishes the primary purpose of the National Health Service—the enabling function—from the secondary purpose, which is the function of running hospitals.

Mr. Winnick: Why are all the national medical bodies totally opposed? Are we really to believe that the British Medical Association, the Joint Consultants Committee and the Royal College of Nursing are not fully committed to

ensuring patient care? They are all opposed. The Minister is reading from a brief on Government policy. He is a well-known wet. Whether those are his views, one does not know, but of course he has ministerial responsibilities. Why not listen to the people? The people had an opportunity in my borough—I have quoted the vote. Why should they be simply ignored and rejected with contempt by the local health authority, the regional health authority, and possibly and unhappily even by the Secretary of State?

Mr. Dorrell: The hon. Gentleman has asked me two questions. I do not know whether he has ever seen a Government brief. I assure him that Government briefs are not normally written like the papers in front of me. I am making my own speech, and nobody else's.

The hon. Gentleman asked how I account for the attitude of the BMA and professional bodies. I account for it in the same way as Aneurin Bevan no doubt did in 1948. They are conservative bodies that represent the status quo, and they have done so at every stage in the development of health care since the war. We are concerned about managing the Health Service to secure the social objective of providing health care on the basis of need, of ability to pay. Within the context of a health service in which I regard the primary purpose as——

Mr. Winnick: What about the people's voice?

Mr. Dorrell: I shall refer to the people's voice because I wish to talk about consultation later, but, before I do that, I stress that the NHS trust concept is part of the process of decentralising the management of hospitals and provider units in the NHS. The National Health Service is the largest employer in the world, with two exceptions—the Red Army and Indian railways, and I would not hold many bets on the Red Army for too much longer. The NHS is a vast organisation which, to ensure efficient management, must make sure that management authority and power is decentralised away from Whitehall towards the managers with the day-to-day job of running the units that deliver the health care. That is why, in the provider side of the NHS, no change will not be an option from next April.

We are setting up two new models of managing NHS hospitals. The first is a directly managed unit within the local authority with much more decentralised power than is traditional in the existing NHS model. The second is trust status, which simply takes one stage further the same logic as will be applied to the directly managed unit and the delegation of management power.

The process of delegation and decentralising power away from the centre of a vast bureaucracy towards the front line of management has been undertaken, often many times, by every big organisation in the rest of British society. I come from a business background. I do not regard the NHS as a business—it is not—but that does not mean that it cannot learn to deliver its objectives more efficiently from the experience of business. Every large British company has at least once—most of them several times—in the years since the NHS was set up, conducted a process of decentralising management power away from the centre, towards the front line, giving managers more authority over their own units and holding them to account for the way in which that authority is used. That is the logic that informs the NHS reforms and is carried through in the concept of NHS trust status.

The hon. Member for Walsall, North asked about consultation and described the consultation process which started when the trust applications were filed as a "charade". I reject that charge absolutely. The consultation process in which we have been engaged has been a serious exercise of gathering views about each individual application. The hon. Gentleman asked why we did not want to accept a public opinion poll on what should happen to a unit. The straight answer is that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is accountable to the House for the way in which the National Health Service is managed and no hon. Member should seek to remove from him that responsibility. Therefore, the consultation process is, unashamedly, one of informing my right hon. Friend about the issues on which he has to decide and whether application for trust status holds out the prospects for better quality management as a trust or as a directly managed unit.

Mr. Winnick: I am grateful to the Minister, who has been kind enough to give way to me twice. Although the Secretary of State is answerable to the House, when making his decision, why should he not take into account the overwhelming rejection of the proposals, as shown by the figures that I quoted? The Minister denies that the consultation exercise is, as my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, South (Mr. George) and I said, a farce and a charade. But why has not the result of the consultation exercise on the Manor and Goscote hospital been placed in the Library? I suspect that the reason is that it would prove what my hon. Friend and I have just said: that there was an overwhelming rejection of the proposal by those involved in the hospital and local residents. If that were not so, why should not the results of that consultation process have been placed in the Library, a few yards away from here?

Mr. Dorrell: When my right hon. Friend makes his decision about this application, along with the other 66 applications for trust status, and announces those decisions to the House, he will take account of all the evidence that he receives during the consultation process. He will also take account of the advice given to him from within the Department, which it has never been the practice of any Government to publish. If we were to publish the result of the consultation exercise without the internal advice available to my right hon. Friend, the House would have only half the available evidence——

Mr. Winnick: That is a weak excuse.

Mr. Dorrell: The hon. Gentleman describes it as a weak excuse, but it seems that if the House wants to know the evidence on which my right hon. Friend makes his decision, the House should see it all, not merely half of it.

The consultation is, quite properly, part of a process whereby Ministers consult, weigh the arguments—not just the numbers—and decide which applications to accept. I am old-fashioned enough to believe that Ministers will be held to account in the House for the way the decision goes. I look forward to being held to account by the hon. Member for Walsall, North for the improvement of health care that will flow to his constituents as a result of the Government's tenure of office.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at one minute to Three o'clock.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 19 November 1990

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

George Kenyon

Mr. Pike: To ask the Attorney-General what information he has regarding the decision of the Crown prosecution service not to proceed with the case against David Holt for the alleged manslaughter of George Kenyon on 24 May 1988.

The Attorney-General: The decision not to proceed with the case against David Holt for the alleged manslaughter of George Kenyon followed a review of the case against him after the case was committed for trial. The Crown prosecution service accepted the advice of leading counsel that there was not a realistic prospect of satisfying a jury beyond reasonable doubt that Mr. Holt was guilty of manslaughter. He was, however, prosecuted and convicted for the offence of operating a machine after a prohibition notice had been served.

I have written to the hon. Member with fuller details regarding the decision.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Attorney-General whether he has received any representations regarding the case against David Holt and Norman Holt for the alleged manslaughter of George Kenyon on 24 May 1988; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: Prior to receiving the hon. Member's question, I have received representations in correspondence from two hon. Members regarding the case against David Holt and Norman Holt for the alleged manslaughter of George Kenyon.

Immigration Appeals

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Attorney-General if he will list the immigration appellate authorities in the United Kingdom, together with the numbers of appeals considered by each of them in each of the past five years for which figures are available.

The Attorney-General: The information requested is set out in the table.

1. Cases[1] considered by Immigration Adjudicators

	Thanet House, London	*Harmondsworth[2]*	*Birmingham*	*Leeds[3]*	*Manchester*
1986[4]	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
1987	3,092	1,392	1,046	905	749
1988	3,335	2,016	1,181	926	778
1989	5,934	2,760	2,368	1,628	1,271
1990[5]	6,112	2,437	1,416	1,049	824

[1] Figures are only available for cases, which can consist of more than one appellant. Figures relate to cases allowed, dismissed and withdrawn.
[2] Includes hearings at Belfast and Cardiff.
[3] Includes hearings at Glasgow and Edinburgh.
[4] Immigration Adjudicators disposed of 8,483 cases in 1986, but a breakdown for the individual centres is not readily available.
[5] January–September

2. Cases[1] considered by the Immigration Appeal Tribunals[2]

	No.
1986	1,004
1987	1,127
1988	1,029
1989	706
1990[3]	614

[1] Figures are only available for cases, which can consist of more than one appellant. Figures relate to cases allowed, dismissed and withdrawn.
[2] The Immigration Appeal Tribunal sits at Thanet House, London.
[3] January–October.

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Attorney-General what provisions exist for bringing forward the dates of appeal hearings when there have been significant delays by foreign embassies in forwarding appeal papers for the immigration appellate authorities.

The Attorney-General: The immigration appellate authorities give full consideration to all applications made to them from either party for the early hearing of any appeal.

Multiple Share Applications

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Attorney-General (1) what representations he has received from *(a)* the Metropolitan police, *(b)* the Serious Fraud Office and *(c)* sponsor Departments for further computer runs to detect illegal multiple share applications in the privatisation of *(a)* British Gas, *(b)* British Airports, *(c)* British Airways, *(d)* British Steel and *(e)* the 10 regional water and sewerage companies;

(2) when he expects to see completed all inquiries into illegal multiple share applications in the privatisation of *(a)* British Gas, *(b)* British Airports, *(c)* British Airways, *(d)* British Steel and *(e)* the 10 regional water companies.

The Solicitor-General: The fraud investigation group of the Crown prosecution service has worked in liaison with the Metropolitan and City police commercial fraud squad to identify and investigate possible criminal offences arising out of multiple applications submitted in the course of the issue of shares for British Gas plc, British Airways plc, Rolls-Royce plc, British Airports Authorities plc and the 10 regional water companies. In each case they have had the assistance of a report by the auditors appointed for the issue by the sponsor Department. It is accompanied by

computerised data. The majority of cases arising from the earlier issues have been concluded; most of those relating to the water privatisation issues remain outstanding.

It is, however, the practice of the CPS and the police when considering suspect cases relating to the water issue to examine all available data relating to earlier issues to ascertain whether any previous dealing by the suspect is revealed which may be relevant to either the evidential or public interest aspect of the decision whether to prosecute. The computerised data are held by the police and are freely accessible by them.

PRIME MINISTER

Community Charge and Electoral Registration

Mr. Madden: To ask the Prime Minister (1) what is her estimate, to the latest available date, of the total numbers of persons in *(a)* Scotland, *(b)* England and *(c)* Wales who have not registered their names in connection with the poll tax; and if she will make a statement;

(2) what action has been taken to warn people in Scotland, England and Wales of the implications of failure to register for poll tax purposes for the appearance of names on the electoral registers.

The Prime Minister: The community charges register and the electoral register are separate entities and are compiled with reference to different criteria and for different purposes. There is no question of anyone being denied the right to vote simply because their name does not appear on the community charges register. I refer the hon. Member to the full answer being given today to him on this subject by my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary and to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) on 15 November 1990 at column 703.

Malaysia

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list all visits of Government Ministers or officials to Malaysia, with dates, since 1979.

The Prime Minister: I have visited Malaysia in April 1985, August 1988 and October 1989. Other ministerial visits, in the period since May 1979 are as follows:

1979
June Mr. Parkinson, Minister of State, Trade and Industry
June Lord Carrington, Secretary of State, FCO

1980
January Mr. Blaker, Minister of State, FCO
March Mr. Blaker, Minister of State, FCO
March Lord Carrington, Secretary of State, FCO

1981
January Lord Trenchard, Minister of State, Ministry of Defence
February Lord Ferrers, Minister of State, Agriculture
April Mr. Baker, Minister of State, Trade and Industry
September Mr. Rees, Minister of State, Trade and Industry
October Mr. Nott, Secretary of State, Defence

1982
February Lord Carrington, Secretary of State, FCO.

1983
Nil

1984
February Mr. Luce, Minister of State, FCO.
May Mr. Baker, Minister of State, Information.
August Lord Bellwin, Minister of State, DOE.

1985
July Mr. Channon, Minister of Trade.
September Mr. Lee, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State MOD.
November Mr. Heseltine, Secretary of State, MOD.

1986
February Mr. Lee, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State MOD.
June Mr. Lee, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State MOD.
June Mr. Renton, Minister of State, FCO.
September Mr. Patten, Minister of State, DOE.
October Mr. Jopling, Minister of Agriculture.

1987
March Mr. Younger, Secretary of State, MOD.
April Lord Hailsham, Lord Chancellor.
September Mrs. Chalker, Minister of State, FCO.

1988
March Mr. Younger, Secretary of State, MOD.
April Sir Geoffrey Howe, Secretary of State FCO.
October Mr. MacGregor, Minister of Agriculture.
October Mr. Sainsbury, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, MOD.
October Mr. Forth, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State DTI.
November Lord Glenarthur, Minister of State, FCO.

1989
February Mr. Atkins, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, DTI.
March Mr. Atkins, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State DTI.
April Mr. Younger, Secretary of State, MOD.
October Mr. Howard, Minister of State, DOE.
October Mr. Major, Secretary of State, FCO.

1990
January Lord Brabazon, Minister of State, FCO.
February Mr. Maude, Minister of State, FCO.

A record of visits by officials is available only at disproportionate cost.

Sub-post Offices

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: To ask the Prime Minister which Minister is responsible for decisions as to the rule governing liability of sub-post offices to the uniform business rate.

The Prime Minister: Policy on non-domestic rating including the valuation hypothesis used in determining rateable values which is set out in the Local Government Finance Act 1988, is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. The assessment of rateable values is undertaken by the Inland Revenue valuation office, responsibility for which rests with my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

ENERGY

Electricity Companies

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) what arrangements he has agreed for cost recovery by the electricity distribution companies for actions undertaken by them in response to directions from him under section 96 of the Electricity Act 1989 in connection with the outbreak of war in the Gulf;

(2) what discussions he has had with the Director General of Electricity Supply regarding the formal arrangements for cost recovery by the electricity distribution companies for complying with directions from him under section 96 of the Electricity Act or the Energy Act 1976 in the event of the outbreak of war in the Gulf.

Mr. Baldry: My Department has had discussions with the Office of Electricity Regulation on the subject of cost recovery in the event of electricity supply emergencies. I see no connection with the possibility of war in the Gulf.

There are no formal arrangements for cost recovery in the event of directions under the Energy Act 1976 or section 96(1)(b) of the Electricity Act 1989. The director general has said that in the event of such directions being given there would be a strong case for considering favourably a request from any company or companies affected for suspension or modification of particular licence requirements to allow them to recover costs necessarily incurred.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what policy considerations led him to conclude his agreement with the leading underwriters in the privatisation of the electricity distribution industry to insert a force majeure clause relating to the risk of war breaking out in the Gulf.

Mr. Baldry: My right hon. Friend decided that the satisfactory underwriting of the sale of shares in the 12 regional electricity companies required specific arrangements to deal with the particular risk of hostilities in the Gulf causing a fall in the market during the offer period. Failure to make such arrangements would, at best, have adversely increased the cost of underwriting and reduced the proceeds from the sale.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will insert a Gulf war risk warning on the advertisements for the flotation of the electricity distribution companies.

Mr. Baldry: The purpose of the advertising campaigns is to publicise the offers for sale of the 12 regional electricity companies. All such advertising contains a warning that shares can go down as well as up and the public should consult an appropriate professional financial adviser if they need advice.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what assessment he has made of the impact of a direction under section 96 of the Electricity Act on the profitability and cash flow of the 12 regional electricity companies.

Mr. Baldry: None.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he next expects to meet the 12 chairmen of the area boards to discuss emergency arrangements arising from a possible outbreak of war in the Gulf and its impact on electricity costs and prices and their companies' cash flow and profitability.

Mr. Baldry: My right hon. Friend and I meet the regional electricity company chairmen from time to time to discuss a wide range of issues.

Fuel Security Code

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met or next expects to meet the Director General of Electricity Supply to review the cost recovery and audit mechanisms in the fuel security code.

Mr. Baldry: I have not met, and have no plans to meet, the Director General of Electricity Supply for this purpose.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what discussions he has had in the last three weeks with the National Grid Company regarding the implementation of the fuel security code and of directions under section 96 of the Electricity Act.

Mr. Baldry: None.

Electricity Appliances (Retailing)

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) what discussions he has had with the 12 chairmen of area electricity boards regarding the sale of their appliance retailing chains and Government participation in the receipts thereof;

(2) what policy considerations led him to exempt sales of the appliance retailing chains from the property clawback arrangements in the privatisation of the electricity distribution companies.

Mr. Baldry: The regional electricity company—REC—prospectus includes relevant information on the retailing businesses including the directors' view of the prospects for those businesses. I expect to get appropriate value for the taxpayer for all parts of the RECs' business on flotation and see no reason why the Government should expect to participate in any subsequent disposal of the retailing business as a going concern.

Coal Supply Contracts

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he anticipates receiving a letter of comfort from the competition directorate of the European Commission regarding the exemption of the coal supply contracts between British Coal, National Power and PowerGen from article 85(3) of the treaty of Rome.

Mr. Baldry: The coal purchase contracts between British Coal and National Power and PowerGen were notified to the European Commission by British Coal. British Coal has received a letter from the Commission's directorate-general for competition indicating that it is preparing a draft decision for the Commission to exempt these agreements under article 85(3) of the treaty of Rome.

South Wales Small Mines Association

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) when he next expects to announce the commencement of enhanced prices for coal produced by the members of the South Wales Small Mines Association, pursuant to his conditional letter of offer to the association dated 24 October;

(2) what response he will be making to the comments dated 30 October of the director of the competition directorate of the European Commission on his letter of offer of enhanced coal prices dated 24 October to the South Wales Small Mines Association.

Mr. Baldry: The offer made by National Power and British Coal to the South Wales Small Mines Association was set out in a paper handed to the association on 24

October at a meeting in my Department. The European Commission's view of the terms of this offer was conveyed in a letter dated 30 October addressed to the solicitors representing the association. I understand that members of the association have voted to reject the offer. It will now be for the Commission to reach a decision on the complaint made by the association which gave rise to the recent negotiations. My Department stands ready to provide the Commission with any further information or assistance it may need.

Sizewell B

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met and next expects to meet the chairman of Nuclear Electric to discuss the contract with the Non-Fossil Purchasing Agency on behalf of the regional electricity companies for purchasing electricity from the Sizewell B nuclear power station.

Mr. Baldry: This is a commercial matter and I have no plans to discuss it with the chairman of Nuclear Electric.

Renewable Energy

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he next expects to meet the Director General of Electricity Supply to discuss the Director General of Electricity Supply's study into the environmental impact of renewables projects, pursuant to page 46 of the pathfinder prospectus for the flotation of the electricity distribution companies.

Mr. Baldry: The Director General of Electricity Supply's study of the environmental impact of renewables projects was made in the context of a review of the draft contracts submitted to him by the 12 regional electricity companies, and preparatory to advising the Secretary of State on the appropriate level of the first renewables order. As I informed the House on 30 October, *Official Report*, columns *443-44*, my right hon. Friend set the level of the renewables order—SI 1990 No. 1859—in accordance with the director general's advice. In these circumstances my right hon. Friend has no plans further to discuss the director general's advice with him.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he expects to make a further non-fossil fuel obligation order in respect of projects involving renewable energy sources.

Mr. Baldry: My right hon. Friend intends to bring forward the first additional renewables tranche of the non-fossil fuel obligation next year.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he next intends to introduce an order under the Electricity Act in respect of permitted generating capacity from renewable energy sources.

Mr. Baldry: My right hon. Friend intends to bring forward the first additional order for the non-fossil fuel obligation in respect of renewables next year.

Non-Fossil Fuel Obligation

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what action he is taking to review the basis on which the Director General of Electricity Supply determined the inclusion of particular schemes in the non-fossil fuel obligation.

Mr. Baldry: The object of the director general of the schemes submitted to him was to assess whe were likely to be capable of being qualifying arran under the provisions of section 33 of the Electr 1989, for the purpose of the renewables order Secretary of State proposed to make. The Gov have no plans to amend those provisions.

Non-Fossil Purchasing Agency

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State fo when he next expects to meet the 12 chairme regional electricity companies to discuss a strengt the role of Non-Fossil Purchasing Agency, pur page 135 of the pathfinder prospectus for the flo the regional electricity companies.

Mr. Baldry: The NFPA is the agent of the 12 electricity companies, and this is therefore a m them.

Nuclear Power Stations

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of Energy if he will make a statement on the life ex of Calder Hall and Chapelcross nuclear power

Mr. Baldry: This is an operational matter fo Nuclear Fuels plc—BNFL—subject to an requirements stipulated by the Health an Executive's nuclear installations inspectorate—N report on British Nuclear Fuels plc's long-ter review of Calder Hall and Chapelcross, publish Health and Safety Executive on 23 April, the installations inspectorate concluded that the would be safe to operate until each reactor is 40 subject to British Nuclear Fuels plc's com programme of work and to satisfactory results regular test and inspection programme required licensing system enforced by the nuclear ins inspectorate. The oldest reactor will reach 40 yea the youngest in 1999.

I understand that it is British Nuclear Fuels pl to continue to operate Calder Hall and Chap long as the stations remain safe and it is econo company believes continued operation beyon years assumed in the present nuclear ins inspectorate assessment could be economically ju will consider a further major safety review to su view at the appropriate time.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Prison Officers

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Department how many women prison officers w prisons in England and Wales hold the rank of officer; and if he will list the prisons.

Mrs. Rumbold: There are 40 female principa serving in the following prisons:

Askham Grange
Bullwood Hall
Cookham Wood
Drake Hall
Feltham
Full Sutton
Garth

Hatfield
Hindley
Holloway
Leeds
Low Newton
The Mount
Nottingham
Risley
Rochester
Styal
Wetherby

Prisons

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the action that his Department has taken in any prison in England and Wales for which he has received a report from the inspector of prisons; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: Since 1980 Her Majesty's chief inspector of prisons has made more than 130 reports to my right hon. and learned Friend on prison establishments in England and Wales. Information about action to implement the recommendations in these reports on individual establishments is set out in the statement we issue when the report is published, copies of which are placed, with the reports themselves, in the Library. Each one is followed up by prison service operational directors and subsequent developments are reported to the chief inspector.

Police Complaints Authority

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the numbers and types of complaint to the Police Complaints Authority in 1989 which relate solely or primarily to Waltham Forest.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The London borough of Waltham Forest lies within the Metropolitan police No. 1 area. Table 5 at appendix C of the Police Complaints Authority's 1989 annual report, a copy of which is in the Library, gives an analysis of the numbers and types of complaints dealt with by the authority in relation to No. 1 area. Figures which relate solely to Waltham Forest are not available.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people are serving on the Police Complaints Authority; how, and on what basis, they are appointed; and whether any are *(a)* women, *(b)* from black and ethnic minority communities and *(c)* people with disabilities.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Police Complaints Authority currently comprises 15 members, including the chairman and two deputy chairmen. All the members, aside from the chairman, are appointed by my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary following a careful selection procedure. The chairman is appointed by Her Majesty the Queen. The normal term of appointment is for three years in the first instance.

Of the 15 members, two are women, three are from ethnic minority backgrounds and none is disabled.

Sentences

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department which areas have *(a)* the greatest and *(b)* the lowest percentage of people sentenced at magistrates courts to receive prison sentences; what are the percentages in each area; and what is the pecentage in Waltham Forest.

Mr. John Patten: The information is given in the table.

This information is published annually in volume 5 of the criminal statistics, England and Wales, supplementary tables, copies of which are in the Library.

Petty sessional divisions with the highest and lowest percentage of persons sentenced to immediate custody 1989

Petty sessional division	*Highest percentage*
Ardudwy-uwch-Artro[1]	21
Ashton-under-Lyne	21
Waltham Forest	8

Petty sessional division	*Lowest percentage*
Brigg[1]	0
Buckingham[1]	0
Bulmer West[1]	0
Caistor[1]	0
Carmarthen North[1]	0
Crickhowell[1]	0
Cricklade	0
Cullompton	0
Diss[1]	
Eccleshall[1]	0
Everley and Pewsey[1]	0
Gilling East[1]	0
Gogledd Preseli[1]	
Hailsham	0
Hallikeld[1]	0
Hang East[1]	0
Holme Beacon[1]	0
Howdenshire[1]	0
Ilminster	0
Isles of Scilly[1]	0
Lambeth[1]	0
Llandrindod Wells[1]	0
Llanidloes[1]	0
Lutterworth[1]	0
Machynlleth[1]	0
Malmesbury[1]	0
Mansion House Justice Room[1]	0
Market Rasen[1]	0
Marlborough[1]	0
Middle Holderness[1]	0
Newtown	0
Plympton	0
Rhayader[1]	0
Rutland	0
Ryedale[1]	0
Saxmundham	0
South Holderness[1]	0
South Molton[1]	0
Stow	0
Swaffham	0
Talgarth[1]	0
Tisbury and Mere[1]	0
Usk[1]	0

Petty sessional division	Lowest percentage
Westbury	0
West London (Walton Street)	0
Whorwellsdown[1]	0
Wincanton[1]	0
Witon Beacon[1]	0

[1] Fewer than 50 people sentenced at the magistrate's court.

Animal Experiments

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the membership of the Animal Procedures Committee, indicating which members have previously held licences to conduct animal experiments, and which have previously been or are currently employed by organisations which undertake such experiments.

Mrs. Rumbold: The membership of the Animal Procedures Committee as at 15 November 1990 is as follows:

Lord Nathan, MA Hon. LLD *(Chairman)*

Dr. Michael Balls, MA DPhil—Reader in Medical Cell Biology, University of Nottingham; Chairman, Trustees of the Fund for the Replacement of Animals in Medical Experiments (FRAME).

Mr. Edward Bernard, FIAT—Chairman, Serotec Ltd.

Professor Margaret Brazier, LLB—Professor of Law, University of Manchester.

Professor Barry Bridges, BSc MD—Professor of Histology, Queen's University, Belfast.

Dr. Roger Brimblecombe, PhD DSc FRCPath FIBiol—Consultant, Smith Kline and Beecham Laboratories.

Dr. Fiona Broughton Pipkin, MA DPhil—Reader in Reproductive Physiology, Queen's Medical Centre, Nottingham.

Mr. Henry Carter, MRCVS—Senior Vice President, Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons.

Professor Anthony Dayan, MD FRCP FRCPath FIBiol—Professor of Toxicology, St. Bartholomew's Hospital.

Mr. Roger Ewbank, OBE MVSc FIBiol MRCVS—Director, Universities Federation for Animal Welfare (UFAW).

Dr. Judith Hampson, BSc PhD—Consultant in animal welfare.

Mr. Clive Hollands—Secretary, Committee for the Reform of Animal Experimentation (CRAE).

Sir Andrew Huxley, OM FRS—Past President, Royal Society.

Dr. Susan Iversen, MA PHd—Director of Behavioural Pharmacology, Merck, Sharp and Dohme Research Laboratories.

Professor John Ledingham, DM FRCP—Professor of Medicine, University of Oxford.

Dr. Brian Newbould, BPharm FPS PhD MCPP—Director, International Research Affairs, ICI Corporate R and T.

Professor Onora O'Neill, MA PhD—Professor of Philosophy, University of Essex.

Professor Thomas Pilkington, MD FRCP—Emeritus Professor of Medicine, St. George's Hospital Medical School.

Professor Lord Soulsby, MA PhD DVSM AM DSc MRCVS—Professor of Animal Pathology, University of Cambridge.

Professor Michael Spyer, DSc—Professor of Physiology, Royal Free Hospital Medical School.

Professor Peter Venables, BA PhD DSc FBPsS—Emeritus Professor of Psychology, University of York.

For the reasons set out in my reply to a question from the hon. Member on 12 November at columns i our practice not to provide information wh identify those involved in animal procedures.

Affiliation Orders

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for Department how many affiliation orders h granted in each of the last three years.

Mr. John Patten: Affiliation orders ceased to from 31 March 1989 and orders for financial pro now granted under the amended Guardianship Act 1971. Information for the period before su were abolished is given in the table.

Affiliation orders granted

Year	Number
1987	10,580
1988	11,410
1989[1]	3,570

[1] 1 January 1989 to 31 March 1989.

DEFENCE

Service Men

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for he will provide for each year the number of se who leave the armed services and subsequently time lapse and the reasons, where known, for le returning in each case.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Apart from the figures in the table for non-commissioned male perso rejoined in the last 10 years, having previously the armed forces, the information requested is available and could be obtained only at disprop cost.

Year of re-entry	Royal Navy[1]	Royal Marines[2]	Army[3]	Royal Air Force[4]
1980-81	339	74	1,052	167
1981-82	128	29	98	44
1982-83	130	17	48	41
1983-84	104	8	155	146
1984-85	53	15	179	84
1985-86	50	17	186	108
1986-87	82	15	213	103
1987-88	121	14	213	105
1988-89	70	9	254	95
1989-90	81	7	376	138

[1] The Royal Navy count as re-entrants only personne complete 22 years pensionable service.

[2] The Royal Marines count as re-entrants only pe could complete their engagement of 9, 14 or 2 appropriate.

[3] The Army count as re-entrants only personnel w reserve liabilities ie "rejoining reservists".

[4] The Royal Air Force count as re-entrants only pe were in the Service on full duty in the 5 years prior

Nuclear Weapons (Germany)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State fo what agreements exist with the German G covering basing arrangements in Germany for p future nuclear weapons.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The 1954 "Presence of Foreign Forces Convention" (Cmd 9617) provides the legal basis for the presence of all British forces in Germany, apart from Berlin.

Cascaded Equipment

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will give details of the costs to the NATO infrastructure fund of transporting cascaded equipment; and what the United Kingdom proportion of this will be;

(2) if he will give details of the NATO cascade programme of equipment limited under the prospective CFE treaty;

(3) what is the cost to Britain of cascading equipment.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to the hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright) on 14 March 1990 at column *290*. The alliance is still examining the opportunities for transferring surplus equipment to other nations and the extent to which the costs incurred can be met from NATO common funding. No decisions have been taken and we do not yet know what costs, if any, may fall to the United Kingdom. The United Kingdom currently contributes 12 per cent. of the costs of the NATO infrastructure programme.

Air-to-Surface Missiles

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) whether the agreements in START differentiating strategic from tactical air-to-surface missiles have any relevance to United Kingdom policy on TASM; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if the United Kingdom will limit the range of its proposed tactical air-to-surface missile so that it will not be defined as strategic according to current START rules.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The START negotiations are bilateral between the United States and the Soviet Union; British nuclear forces would, therefore, not be included in any agreement. Our choice of a TASM will be guided by the need to retain a credible and effective deterrent capability.

Trident

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether there has been any change in the Government's financial arrangements for the leasing of Trident D5 missiles.

Mr. Alan Clark: The United Kingdom is not leasing Trident D5 missiles; it is purchasing them outright. The financial arrangements for their purchase remain unchanged.

HMS Challenger

Mr. Speed: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the cost of the 85 tonne crane installed in HMS Challenger, including structural alterations to the ship.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: A 30 tonne crane was fitted into HMS Challenger in September 1990. The acquisition and installation costs are commercial-in-confidence.

Mr. Speed: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence why a new 85 tonne crane was installed in HMS Challenger a few weeks before the ship was to be sold to commercial interests; and whether the cost of this crane and its installation will be fully reflected in the price being sought from prospective purchasers.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The crane had been bought some time before the decision was taken to decommission HMS Challenger. The Ministry of Defence will naturally endeavour to obtain the most competitive price possible for the ship from prospective purchasers.

Mr. Speed: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps he will take to ensure that the decision to dispose of HMS Challenger at the end of the current year will not adversely affect the security of the United Kingdom's strategic nuclear deterrent.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The disposal of HMS Challenger will not adversely affect the security of the United Kingdom's strategic nuclear deterrent.

HMS Churchill

Mr. Speed: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much has been spent to date on refitting HMS Churchill at Rosyth dockyard and over what period of time; and how much work would have to be done to allow the submarine's return to the active fleet.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: I refer my hon. Friend to the answers given by my hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces to the hon. Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill) on 15 November, *Official Report*, columns *195-98*.

Malaysia (Equipment Sales)

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the dates on which all contracts for sales of military equipment from Britain to Malaysia were signed since 1979 and the date on which the exports were authorised.

Mr. Alan Clark: It has been the consistent policy of successive Administrations not to provide details of defence exports to specific countries.

Forces in Europe Treaty

Mr. Arbuthnot: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give details of the limits imposed by the conventional forces in Europe treaty on the United Kingdom's holdings of treaty-limited equipment.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The CFE treaty imposes ceilings on the holdings of certain types of equipment by each group of states. It obliges the members of each group to agree a division of these collective ceilings among themselves, and to notify the other parties. The allocations thus agreed for each nation can thereafter be increased with the consent of other members of the same group. As a result of consultations with our alliance partners, we have agreed the following allocations for the United Kingdom, to apply once the reductions necessitated by the treaty have been completed:

	Number
Battle Tanks	1,015
Artillery	630
Armoured Combat Vehicles	3,170

	Number
Combat Aircraft	900
Attack Helicopters	384

Mr. Arbuthnot: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give details of the numbers and types of United Kingdom equipment covered by the conventional forces in Europe treaty and their location.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The information requested is as follows:

Type	United Kingdom	Elsewhere[1]	Total[2]
Battle Tanks			
Chieftain	244	508	752
Challenger	44	364	408
Centurion	11	27	38
Total	299	899	1,198
Artillery			
M107	4	33	37
M110	1	15	16
M109	8	101	109
FH70	68	—	68
Abbot	18	133	151
105 Lt Gun	167	13	180
5·5" Howitzer	9	—	9
Pack Howitzer	52	—	52
MLRS	6	8	14
Total	333	303	636
Armoured Combat Vehicles			
FV432	180	1,060	1,240
FV432 Rarden	1	12	13
Humber	274	39	313
Saracen	121	45	166
Spartan	254	278	532
Saxon	291	11	302
Saladin	1	12	13
Scorpion	173	115	288
Warrior	115	211	326
Total	1,410	1,783	3,193
Combat Aircraft			
Buccaneer	62	—	62
Canberra	50	—	50
Harrier	94	30	124
Hunter	34	—	34
Jaguar	136	—	136
Lightning	1	—	1
Phantom	97	28	125
Tornado	214	96	310
Total	688	154	842
Attack Helicopters			
Gazelle	128	65	193
Lynx	56	53	109
Scout	66	—	66
Total	250	118	368

[1] Almost entirely Germany, but some small numbers in Belgium, Gibraltar and Cyprus.

[2] Includes equipment deployed to the Gulf area.

A copy of the full United Kingdom CFE data declaration has been placed in the Library of the House.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Polly Peck International

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary
Trade and Industry whether he has now decide
a report on the affairs of Polly Peck Internatio
he will investigate the role of the Serious Fra
this matter; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 12 Novembe*
right hon. Friend is in touch with the Serious
and with the administrators of Polly Peck Inte
both of whom are conducting investigations
come to light in the course of those inves
otherwise which need investigating under the
Act rather than by the Serious Fraud Office
hesitate to investigage them.

The Serious Fraud Office is accountable
director to the Attorney-General and to Parl

Trade Barriers

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the Secretary of St
and Industry to what extent EEC or na
barriers of all types relating to products from
central Europe have been reduced in the las

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 15 November*
signing of bilateral trade and economic
agreements between the EC and the U
Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria and Romania ove
months, following earlier agreements with
Hungary, completed a framework for
co-operation with the countries of central
Europe. Agreements include a timetab
elimination and suspension of quantita
restrictions by the EEC on industrial
agricultural imports from these countr
arrangements on MFA and ECSC products a
separate bilateral arrangements.

The liberalisation measures provided
co-operation agreements have been accele
initiative of the EEC under its aid programm
and eastern Europe—PHARE. As a result
measures have been taken by the EEC.

With effect from 1 January 1990, all quant
restrictions were liberalised or suspended for
Poland and Hungary and limited duty-free acce
by conferring general system of preferences st
countries for five years:

With effect from 1 October 1990 all quant
restrictions which discriminated against produ
trading countries were suspended for
Czechoslovakia.

The PHARE programme also provides
exports to the Community of MFA pr
Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland. In D
a bilateral textile agreement was signed betw
and USSR which provided for greater acc
textiles to Community markets.

The bilateral arrangements on expor
products from central and eastern Europ
relaxed as part of the process to phase out
these measures by March 1992.

All EEC trade restrictions which appl
goods were liberalised as part of the Germ
process.

Advanced Technology

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if his Department has been invited to contribute to the symposium on European collaboration in advanced technology, organised by the Institute of European Trade and Technology, to be held in London on 16 November.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 16 November 1990]:* Yes. My Department has regular contacts with the Institute of European Trade and Technology and an official from my Department addressed this symposium on European opportunities for United Kingdom industry.

ESPRIT

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what contribution was made by his Department to the conference on the European Communities ESPRIT programme, organised by ECCO at the Brussels congress centre from 12 to 15 November.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 16 November 1990]:* The ESPRIT conference in Brussels was organised by the European Commission and provides an opportunity for existing and potential participants in this European Community research and development programme to obtain information on ESPRIT. My officials took part in the conference and will continue to bring opportunities for participation to the attention of United Kingdom industry.

Cosmetic Products

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make it his policy to ensure that all cosmetic products have their ingredients listed in full on the packaging in order to protect people with skin allergies.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 16 November 1990]:* European Commission is about to publish proposals full ingredient labelling of cosmetics throughout European Community. I will consider them when they published.

Cellacast

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade Industry if he will take steps urgently to investigate health implications of the use of Cellacast; and if he make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: I have been asked to reply.

A research assessment of splinting materials of this was carried out for the Department by a team from Sal university who reported in 1989. Their conclusion was synthetic bandages are unlikely to cause a problem to ei operators or patients unless cast removal is being formed for protracted periods in a particularly confi and unventilated environment. In the latter case, use of extraction equipment must be considered prudent.

WALES

Housing, Dwyfor

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales w has been the total expenditure in Dwyfor district on hou renovation and repair of *(a)* local authority housing st and *(b)* private sector accommodation, in each of the five years; and what is the projected expenditure recognised by his Department for 1990-91 and 1991-92

Mr. Grist: The information requested is given in following table. Information for 1991-92 is not available.

£,0

	1985-86	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*[1]
Gross renovation of local authority dwellings	59	101	54	275	444	500
Gross renovation grants to the private sector	377	665	526	461	713	1,173

[1] Local authority forecast.

Passengers

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the numbers of passengers per annum carried by *(a)* bus, *(b)* rail, *(c)* private car and *(d)* aircraft in Wales in each of the years from 1985 to date; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The information requested is given in the following tables:

Passengers carried, by mode of transport

(a) Bus and coach[1]

	Passenger journeys (million)
1985-86	209
1986-87	196
1987-88	209
1988-89	215

Source: Welsh Transport Statistics.

[1] Data available by financial year only.

(b) Aircraft

	Passengers handled at terminals[1]
1985	388,651
1986	489,385
1987	632,339
1988	621,046
1989	697,800

Source: Welsh Transport Statistics.

[1] Includes all arrivals at and departures from Welsh termi except transit passengers.

Current information is not available for rail or priv car passengers, but a national travel survey conducte 1985-86 by the Department of Transport showed that numbers of journeys made within the Principality person per week were as follows:

	Number
Rail	0·15
Bus and coach	1·21
Car and taxi	9·31
Other	3·16
TOTAL	13·83

Food Industry (Training)

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what measures he is proposing to improve the training of those involved in the food industry in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: A consultation document on hygiene training for food handlers was issued in December 1989 and the comments received are currently being assessed. The Government intend to issue the relevant regulations in due course.

Retail Sales

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has on the percentage change in retail sales in Wales for each of the last four quarters; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Information is not available in the form requested.

Ministerial Advisers

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, further to his reply of 13 November, *Official Report*, column *106*, whether he will review his policy with regard to the appointment of special advisers who have previously been parliamentary candidates; and whether he will make a statement on the operation of his current policy.

Sir Wyn Roberts: My right hon. Friend has nothing to add to the answer given to the hon. Gentleman on 13 November.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

EC Measures

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list to the most recent available date the number of measures agreed by the EEC and not yet passed into legislation by each of the member states, in rank order.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Figures on the records of individual EC member states in implementing all EC directives are unfortunately not centralised. However, the Commission keeps centralised figures on the implementation of the proposals contained in the original White Paper for a single market. The latest Commission report, produced in October shows that of 107 measures due to be implemented by end 1990, the following measures remained unimplemented in the member states:

	number
Denmark	15
United Kingdom	18
Germany	20
Portugal	
Spain	
France	
Ireland	
Belgium	
Netherlands	
Luxembourg	
Greece	
Italy	

Further details are given in the Depa and Industry's document, "The Single M on Commission White Paper", which is Library of the House.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES A

Salmon

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Minister Fisheries and Food if he will estimate *(a* salmon available for sale in the United 1970, (ii) 1980 and (iii) 1989 and *(b)* f years, what percentage of salmon were (i) caught in offshore waters and (iii) from

Mr. Curry: The information requested in the level of detail sought. The total a available for sale in the United Kingdom farmed and imported fish of a variety of s Pacific, and so on. It is not possible to how much of the total domestic—Atlanti offered for sale; further, records of impo not subdivided by number or species.

Comprehensive statistics of wild reported as caught by rod, net and tra annually by the Fisheries Departments available in the Libraries of the House. possible to provide an estimate of the in catches of Atlantic salmon. These are:

	Inland (tonnes)
1970	1,191
1980	934
[1]1989	817

[1]provisional figure

Figures for estimated United Kingdom salmon production are:

	(t
1970	
1980	
1989	

Figures for the total United Kingdom chilled and frozen salmon—all species—

	(t
1970	
1980	
[1]1989	

[1]provisional figure

Bananas

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what estimates are available of the number of bananas from the Windward Islands and Jamaica that would be bought in the United Kingdom if no trade preferences for those countries existed.

Mr. Curry: None. Our objective is an effective preferential arrangement after 1992, which will enable a continuing flow of bananas from the Caribbean, in line with the Community's commitments under the Lomé convention.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when a decision is likely to be taken in the European Community on trade arrangements for bananas after 1992; and by whom.

Mr. Curry: We cannot say when a decision will be taken as no proposals have yet come forward from the European Commission. The decision will be taken by the Council of Ministers.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proposals have been put forward by the European Community Commission on preferences for imports of bananas from the Windward Islands and Jamaica after 1992.

Mr. Curry: None.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether the United Kingdom's position on trade preferences for imports of bananas from the Windward Islands and Jamaica after 1992 has changed since Her Majesty's Government's discussion paper was produced.

Mr. Curry: The Government continue to believe that the framework set out in that discussion paper provides the best means yet identified for balancing the different interests that would be affected by common arrangements for bananas. Discussions of the best way forward continue with all interested parties.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Exports

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give the annual figure for exports of goods and services, expressed in current price terms, as a percentage of gross domestic product since 1979 and for the first half of 1990; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Information relating to the export of goods and services—current prices—as a proportion of gross domestic product can be found in table 1.2 of the 1990 edition of the CSO's "United Kingdom National Accounts" publication—the Blue Book—and in table B of the CSO's quarterly "Gross Domestic Product" press notice. Copies of both are available in the Library of the House or alternatively the data can be found on the CSO database which can be accessed through the Library.

Debt

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exc whether he has received any representations to assist and finance houses in respect of increased indebt resulting from property prices; and if he will m statement.

Mr. Maples: My right hon. Friend receives repr tions from various sources about a range of subject run-up to the Budget.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exc what information he has on the levels of *(a)* person and *(b)* company sector debt in 1988, 1989, 19 estimated for 1991; and what assessment he has m the reasons for the changes in level.

Mr. Maples: Figures for the debt or financial lia of the personal sector and industrial and comm companies are available up until the end of 1989 These data are set out in table 12.2 and 12.3 of "U Kingdom National Accounts"—the CSO Blue Book edition.

Revenue

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exche he will list for each year since 1979 *(a)* the tot revenue and *(b)* the total of all income to the Exc since 1979; and if he will also list it on the basis of (i and (ii) 1989 prices.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Information as is n available is included on the CSO database in the foll series—identified by their database code:

ATAB:
general government: total taxes (excluding comm charge) and royalties.

ATAF:
general government receipts.

DJDT:
implied GDP (at market prices) deflator.

The database can be accessed on line by the Ho Commons Library.

Taxation

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor o Exchequer if he will make a statement setting out *(* changes in policy which would require to be made b Majesty's Government, *(b)* the restrictions on the fre of action in tax decision making and *(c)* the impact tax levels and on the zero rate if the various pro relating to indirect tax harmonisation and Comm statistics were approved by the Council of Ministe

Mr. Ryder: *(a)* The policy implications o European Commission proposals covering indire harmonisation and intra-Community trade statisti detailed in the explanatory memoranda submitted b Customs and Excise and the Central Statistical respectively. Copies of the memoranda are available Library of the House.

(b) The proposals would require approximati both VAT and excise duties; this would of c constrain our fiscal decisions.

(c) The Commission's revised VAT approxim proposals suggest an unspecified minimum standar

and a reduced rate of 4 to 9 per cent; for excises there are various proposals according to product category, for minimum rates or rate bands to be applied from 1 January 1993, and target rates to be achieved thereafter. The proposed rates would have a significant impact on United Kingdom rate levels and revenue; details are again given in the explanatory memoranda.

With regard to zero rates, the Commission's revised thinking of May 1989 accepted that these could be retained under certain circumstances; although the present VAT technical proposals do not include an arrangement to carry forward the legal base for zero rates after 1992. We would not, of course, agree to any proposals which would restrict our ability to retain a zero rate.

The Government have always made it clear that they do not consider centrally determined tax approximation to be necessary for the completion of the single market or desirable for the differing economic circumstances of member states. As adoption of the Commission proposals would require the unanimous agreement of member states, the United Kingdom's position is safeguarded.

Coinage

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when the old 5p coin will be demonetised following the introduction of the new 5p coin.

Mr. Maples: The old 5p coin will be demonetised and cease to be legal tender after 31 December 1990. Although it will not be possible for the general public to spend old 5p coins after that date, it will still be possible to return them by paying them in through the high street banks for a limited period.

Ministerial Advisers

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what general guidelines are issued for setting the salaries of personal ministerial advisers;

(2) whether the salary guidelines in connection with the appointment of ministerial personal advisers include annual uprating by reference to the retail prices index;

(3) whether he will review the guidelines for the salaries paid to personal ministerial advisers to ensure earnings as advisers do not exceed earnings in previous employment;

(4) what are the guidelines for setting salaries for Ministers' personal advisers, where those appointed were previously self-employed.

Mr. Ryder *[holding answer 16 November 1990]:* There is a pay spine for ministerial special advisers. The starting point on that spine for each adviser is assessed primarily by reference to the individual's recent normal earnings: this is taken as evidence of the "market rate". There is flexibility to go above this exceptionally if there is evidence that an individual's recent earnings have been less than his or her normal market expectation or that the individual could have expected to increase his or her remuneration in the near future if they did not accept the appointment. These guidelines apply to all advisers, including those who were previously self-employed and I have no plans to revise them. The pay spine is revalued annually in line with the general increase in civil service pay.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Energy Efficiency

38. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Lord President of the Council what energy efficiency steps have been taken in the House since 1 January.

Mr. MacGregor: Improving energy efficiency in the House is being achieved in three ways—by specific energy conservation projects, better housekeeping, and by incorporating energy conservation measures in the design of new facilities and major replacement programmes.

Members' Working Conditions

39. **Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will pay a visit to the west cloisters in the Palance of Westminster to inspect working conditions for hon. Members.

Mr. MacGregor: I shall visit the west cloisters as soon as possible.

EC Standing Committees

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will make a statement concerning the establishment and operation of the new Standing Committees appointed to consider documents originating from the European Community.

Mr. MacGregor: Standing Order No. 102, as amended by the House on 24 October, provides for the establishment of three European Standing Committees from the start of this Session. These Committees will each have 10 members who will be appointed by the Committee of Selection for a whole Session. I hope that the nominations will take place shortly and that the European Standing Committees will be able to begin holding debates on EC documents as soon as possible thereafter.

Scottish Select Committee

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Lord President of the Council what representations he has received regarding the nomination of a Select Committee on Scottish Affairs.

Mr. MacGregor: I have received a number of such representations.

Members' Lounge

Mr. Tredinnick: To ask the Lord President of the Council what steps have been taken to replace the former Members' lounge adjacent to the Library corridor now occupied by the Labour party.

Mr. MacGregor: Although relocation of the facility provided by the room in question did not form part of the Accommodation and Administration Sub-Committee's deliberations when approval was given for a change of use, it is understood that it will be considered in the context of accommodation becoming available in the House as a result of moves to phase 1 of the new parliamentary building.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Schools (North Yorkshire)

Mr. Cabom: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what is the 1990-91 North Yorkshire education authority capital budget for furnishings and equipment in North Yorkshire schools;

(2) what is the 1990-91 North Yorkshire education authority capital budget for building work in North Yorkshire schools.

Mr. Fallon: North Yorkshire local education authority received annual capital guidelines in 1990-91 for education expenditure on schools and further and higher education of £4·1 million. This represents no more than the minimum level of suggested capital spending on education. LEAs are free to spend whatever they think fit from whatever overall resources are available to them for capital spending. I understand that North Yorkshire LEA's capital budget for 1990-91 is in the region of £5 million.

National Curriculum Council

Mr. Cabom: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the cost of the carpet in the foyer of the National Curriculum Council's new building in Skeldergate, York.

Mr. Eggar: There is no carpet in the foyer of the National Curriculum Council's new building in Skeldergate, York.

Mr. Cabom: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many staff work in the National Curriculum Council's new building in Skeldergate, York.

Mr. Eggar: The number of staff currently working in the National Curriculum Council's new headquarters in York is 83. The building is also used for meetings of NCC's council, curriculum committees, task groups and conferences.

Mr. Cabom: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the cost of the lease of the National Curriculum Council's new building in Skeldergate, York.

Mr. Eggar: The annual rent of the National Curriculum Council's new headquarters is currently under review, but is likely to be in the region of £250,000 plus VAT.

Mr. Cabom: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the capital cost of equipment and furnishings for the National Curriculum Council's new building in Skeldergate, York.

Mr. Eggar: The cost of the fixtures, fittings and furnishings of the National Curriculum Council's new headquarters is likely to be £560,000.

Assisted Places

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the schools involved in the assisted places scheme, with the total number of places and the number of assisted places in each school.

Mr. Fallon: The latest information available is in respect of the 1989-90 academic year as follows:

Assisted places scheme
Academic year 1989-90

Name of school	*Number of pupils on roll*	*Number of assisted pupils*
Abbey School, Reading	920	66
Abingdon School	732	86
Ackworth School, Pontefract	456	5
Aldenham School, Elstree	370	32
Alice Ottley School, Worcester	670	77
Alleyns School, Dulwich	921	198
Ardingly College, Haywards Heath	482	5
Arnold School, Blackpool	800	75
Ashford School, Kent	700	42
Bancrofts School, Woodford	710	80
Bath High School GPDST	590	109
Batley Grammar School	631	252
Bedales School, Petersfield	408	6
Bedford High School	1,034	98
Bedford Modern School	1,200	161
Bedford School	1,120	100
Dame Alice Harpur School	1,030	153
Belvedere School GPDST, Liverpool	550	170
Berkhamsted School	800	27
Berkhamsted School for Girls	557	28
Birkenhead High School GPDST	948	260
Birkenhead School	990	252
Bishop's Stortford College	360	39
Blackheath High School GPDST	570	91
Bloxham School, Banbury	369	4
Bolton School (Boys)	1,000	246
Bolton School (Girls)	1,095	242
Bootham School, York	315	5
Bradfield College, Reading	530	2
Bradford Girls Grammar	900	57
Bradford Grammar School	1,146	212
Brentwood School	1,080	93
Brighton and Hove High School GPDST	744	141
Brighton College	498	100
Bristol Cathedral School	461	139
Bristol Grammar School	1,203	270
Bromley High School GPDST	693	97
Bromsgrove School, Worcestershire	555	3
Bruton School for Girls	580	116
Burgess Hill School for Girls	578	3
Bury Grammar School (Boys)	750	180
Bury Grammar School (Girls)	1,120	245
Canford School, Wimborne	530	27
Carmel College, Wallingford	290	85
Casterton School, Cumbria	380	40
Caterham School	720	122
Central Newcastle High School GPDST	780	117
Charterhouse, Godalming	700	9
Cheadle Hulme School	1,000	134
Cheltenham Ladies College	840	3
Chigwell School	617	63
Christ's Hospital	825	5
Churchers College, Petersfield	460	110
City of London School	850	138
City of London School for Girls	660	108
City of London Freemens School, Ashtead	649	2
Clifton College, Bristol	700	69
Clifton High School, Bristol	752	44
Colfes School, London SE12	860	178
Colston's School, Bristol	341	83
Colston's Girls' School	660	154
Coventry School	2,748	262
Cranleigh School	570	40
Croham Hurst School, Croydon (9/89)	590	5
Croydon High School GPDST	1,040	94
Culford School, Bury St. Edmunds	710	47
Dame Allans Boys School, Newcastle upon Tyne	440	121
Dame Allans Girls School	424	131
Dauntseys School, Devizes	588	50
Denstone College, Uttoxeter	360	119
Douai School, Reading (9/89)	295	2
Dover College (9/89)	310	3
Downe House School, Newbury (9/89)	460	1

Name of school	Number of pupils on roll	Number of assisted pupils
Dulwich College	1,430	282
Durham School (9/89)	378	5
Edgbaston C of E College for Girls (9/89)	470	4
Edgehill College, Bideford	502	140
Ellerslie School, Worcestershire (9/89)	250	5
Eltham College, London SE9	700	83
Emanuel School, London SW11	760	278
Epsom College	645	24
Exeter School	675	168
Farnborough Hill School	520	167
Feixstowe College (9/89)	320	5
Felsted School, Dunmow	500	51
Forest School, London E17	445	132
Francis Holland School NW1 (9/89)	360	5
Friends School, Saffron Walden	265	75
Giggleswick School, Settle (9/89)	296	0
Godolphin School, Salisbury (9/89)	320	4
Godolphin and Latymer School, London W6	700	172
Greshams School, Norfolk	480	10
Guildford High School for Girls (9/89)	580	3
Haberdashers Askes School, Elstree	1,300	216
Haberdashers Askes Schools for Girls, Elstree	1,096	115
Haileybury and Imperial Service College (9/89)	689	4
Hampton School	200	183
Harrogate College	400	19
Headington School, Oxford (9/89)	680	0
Hereford Cathedral School	603	225
Highate School	298	36
Hulme Grammar, Boys, Oldham	860	212
Hulme Grammar, Girls, Oldham	585	185
Hurstpierpoint College, Hassocks (9/89)	565	3
Hymers College, Hull	865	164
Ipswich High School GPDST	595	123
Ipswich School	626	75
James Allens Girls School, Dulwich	850	158
John Lyon School, Harrow	490	103
Kent College, Canterbury	646	88
Kimbolton Schools, Cambridgeshire (9/89)	685	5
King Edwards School at Bath	685	114
King Edwards School, Birmingham	775	251
King Edward VI High School, Birmingham	560	158
King Edward VII School, Lytham	645	230
King Edward VI School, Norwich	761	109
King Edward VI School, Southampton	944	237
King Edwards School, Witley	523	76
Kings College School, Wimbledon	650	83
Kings High School for Girls, Warwick	985	152
Kings School, Bruton (9/89)	333	3
Kings School, Chester	560	89
Kings School, Macclesfield	1,043	154
Kings School, Rochester	438	51
Kings School, Worcester	856	166
Kingston Grammar School	567	149
Kingswood School, Bath	484	42
Kirkham Grammar School	510	80
Lady Eleanor Holles School, Hampton	810	55
La Sagesse Convent School, Newcastle upon Tyne	340	139
Latymer Upper School, London W6	1,030	308
Lady Lumley's School, Peterborough (9/89)	148	2
Leeds Girls High School	946	102
Leeds Grammar School	1,184	197
Leicester Grammar School (9/89)	550	5
Leighton Park School, Reading (9/89)	360	5
Leys School, Cambridge	375	35
Liverpool College	700	171
Lord Wandsworth College, Basingstoke	440	82
Lorento Convent Grammar School, Altrincham	819	60
Loughborough Grammar	880	125
Loughborough High School	520	88
Magdalen College School, Oxford	500	119
Malvern College Group	600	58
Manchester Grammar School	1,460	262
Manchester High School	965	171
Marist Convent Senior School, Ascot (9/89)	500	1
Maynard School, Exeter	530	155
Merchant Taylors, Liverpool	769	203
Merchant Taylors Girls', Liverpool	811	170
Merchant Taylors, Northwood	700	68
Mill Hill School	540	55
Monkton Combe School, Bath	340	35
Mount Carmel School, Cheshire (9/89)	589	5
Mount St. Mary's College, Sheffield	283	52
Mount School, York (9/89)	288	5
Newcastle Under Lyme School, Staffordshire	1,350	466
Newcastle Upon Tyne Church High School (9/89)	607	5
Northampton High School	765	162
North London Collegiate School, Edgware	850	83
Norwich High School GPDST	835	168
Nottingham Girls High School GPDST	1,054	184
Nottingham High School	830	134
Notting Hill and Ealing High GPDST	768	118
Oakham School, Rutland (9/89)	986	3
Old Palace School, Croydon	760	184
Oxford High School GPDST	650	94
Pangbourne College, Reading (9/89)	330	5
Perse School for Boys, Cambridge	486	62
Perse School for Girls	710	66
Plymouth College	695	187
Pocklington School, York	714	130
Polam Hall School, Darlington (9/89)	465	5
Portsmouth Grammar School	1,020	178
Portsmouth High School GPDST	675	135
Prior Park College, Bath (9/89)	386	3
Putney High School GPDST	825	16
Queen Elizabeth Grammar, Blackburn	1,200	244
Queen Elizabeth Grammar, Wakefield	975	153
Queen Elizabeth Hospital School, Bristol	480	166
Queen Mary School, Lytham	700	242
Queens College, Taunton	610	64
Queens College, London W1	400	60
Queens School, Chester	578	71
Ratcliffe College, Leicestershire	424	61
Redland High School, Bristol	631	73
Red Maids School, Bristol	475	163
Reed's School, Cobham (9/89)	346	5
Reigate Grammar School	870	99
Rendcomb College, Cirencester (9/89)	275	5
Repton School, Derby	559	45
Rossal School, Fleetwood	476	45
Royal Grammar School, Guildford	800	107
Royal Grammar School, Newcastle	1,130	271
Royal Grammar School, Worcester	874	257
St. Albans School	666	121
St. Albans High School for Girls	685	59
St. Ambrose College, Altrincham	640	85
St. Anselms College, Birkenhead	850	184
St. Bede's College, Manchester	866	220
St. Bees School, Cumbria	367	82
St. Benedict's School, Ealing	585	75
St. Catherine's School, Bramley	615	35
St. Dunstan's College, Catford	830	153
St. Edmund's College, Ware	463	59
St. Edward's College, Liverpool	850	402
St. Felix School, Southwold (9/89)	355	4
St. George's College, Weybridge	600	27
St. Helen's School, Northwood	880	27

Name of school	Number of pupils on roll	Number of assisted pupils
St. John's College, Southsea	860	173
St. John's School, Leatherhead	460	14
St. Joseph's College, Ipswich	738	72
St. Joseph's Convent, Reading	534	102
St. Lawrence College, Ramsgate (9/89)	360	5
St. Margaret's School, Bushey (9/89)	460	1
St. Margaret's School, Exeter (9/89)	450	4
St. Mary's College, Crosby (9/89)	804	244
St. Mary's Convent, Cambridge	552	98
St. Mary's Hall, Brighton	386	52
St. Maurs Convent, Weybridge	470	57
St. Paul's School, Barnes	640	82
St. Paul's Girls School, Hammersmith	634	55
St. Peter's School, York	480	125
St. Swithun's School, Winchester	406	0
Salesian College, Farnborough	450	68
Scarborough College (9/89)	389	5
School of St. Helen and St. Katherine, Abingdon	520	80
Sedbergh School, Cumbria	495	36
Sheffield High School GPDST	683	81
Shrewsbury High School GPDST	570	67
Sir William Perkins School, Chertsey	490	93
Solihull School (9/89)	976	5
South Hampstead High School GPDST	670	58
Stamford School	950	71
Stamford High School	1,006	83
Stockport Grammar School	1,270	252
Stonyhurst College, Blackburn	433	30
Stowe School, Buckingham	608	4
Streatham Hill and Clapham High GPDST	500	156
Surbiton High School (9/89)	600	5
Sutton High School GPDST	821	68
Sutton Valence School, Maidstone	413	60
Sydenham High School GPDST	650	109
Talbot Heath School, Bournemouth	597	133
Taunton School	585	51
Tonbridge School	660	3
Tormead School, Guildford (9/89)	545	1
Trent College, Derbyshire	614	129
Trinity School of John Whitgift, Croydon	800	143
Truro School	863	115
Truro High School	500	53
University College School, London NW3	770	68
Upton Hall Convent School	600	171
Ursuline Convent School, Kent (9/89)	330	5
Ursuline High School, Ilford	410	120
Wakefield High School	760	139
Walthamstow Hall, Sevenoaks	532	72
Warwick School	985	136
Wellingborough School	830	59
Wellington College, Berkshire	829	32
Wellington School, Somerset	798	196
Wells Cathedral School	587	75
West Buckland School, Barnstable	534	71
Westholme School, Blackburn	951	5
Westminster School	600	37
Whitgift School, Croydon	900	109
William Hulme Grammar School, Manchester	790	220
Wimbledon High School GPDST	700	68
Winchester College	659	21
Wisbech Grammar School	566	281
Withington Girls School, Manchester	560	68
Wolverhampton Grammar School	635	260
Woodbridge School, Suffolk	542	112
Woodhouse Grove School, Bradford	410	5
Wycliffe College, Stonehouse	329	39
Yarm School, Cleveland (9/89)	417	5

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the fees charged in those schools involved in the assisted places scheme.

Mr. Fallon: Schools participating in the assisted places scheme charge assisted pupils the same fees as other pupils. Fee structures are related to pupils' age groups and differ considerably from school to school. Full details of schools' fees can be found in the directories published by the independent schools' associations, copies of which are held in the Library.

Research Councils

Sir Ian Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what are his reasons for not publishing the 1990 report of the Advisory Board for the Research Councils.

Mr. Alan Howarth: My right hon. and learned Friend considers that the advice that the board offers as part of the public expenditure survey should be confidential, as is normal for similar advice from other bodies such as the Universities Funding Council and the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council. He recognises that the board may wish to make its views on some matters, including priorities for United Kingdom science, more widely available and will be discussing this with the chairman of the board.

Universities Funding Council

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what policy the Universities Funding Council is required to adopt to ensure that grant aid which has been allocated by it for specific developmental projects is not diverted to other purposes, such as the reduction of general college deficits.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Under the Education Reform Act 1988, the Universities Funding Council is empowered to attach conditions to its grant to universities, including repayment of grant if the conditions are not met.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Redundant Buildings

27. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners, what steps are being taken by the Church Commissioners to make redundant buildings available to alleviate the problems of the homeless.

Mr. Alison: Some 13 redundant churches have been appropriated to use as night shelters or day centres or sold or leased to local authorities or housing associations, while more than 100 of the sites of demolished redundant churches have been disposed of to local authorities or housing associations.

Ordinations

29. **Mr. Speller:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners, what representations he has received on the subject of the ordination of women ministers.

Mr. Alison: I have received no representations on this subject.

SCOTLAND

Civic Government

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to complete the current review of the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982.

Mr. Lang: The current review of the 1982 Act has been delayed by pressure of other work but it should be completed shortly. Thereafter we intend to publish in the course of next year a consultation paper setting out our proposals for changes to the Act.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Mozambique

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many representations he has received calling for the United Kingdom to help fund the shortfall in the United Nations Mozambique emergency appeal, to help relief and resettlement of refugees and displaced persons; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: In addition to early-day motion 1417 of 17 October and questions from the hon. Members for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) and for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) some 40 letters of representation have been received on this issue. The position remains as stated in my replies to the hon. Members for Bradford, West and for Cynon Valley on 19 October, at column *938*, and 13 November, at column *99*, respectively.

Rain Forests

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the results of the Minister for Overseas Development's visit to Brazilian and Amazon rain forest projects for Brazilian-British co-operation in conserving rain forests.

Mrs. Chalker: My visit was valuable in giving me a closer understanding of the issues involved. I am convinced that our environmental co-operation programme with Brazil is on the right lines and that we should press on with developing our programme in both the urban and the rain forest sectors. I am pleased to have been able to sign agreements on projects in both areas.

I also look forward to new project proposals emerging as a result of the Anglo-Brazilian environmental conference, which I opened in Brasilia.

Human Rights Abuses

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs for which countries, other than the Sudan, Her Majesty's Government have stopped British development aid, on the ground of human rights abuses.

Mrs. Chalker: We have stopped British development aid to Burma and project aid to Somalia. We are at present running down our project aid to Sudan in response to the human rights situation there. We have also delayed implementation of a pledge of programme aid to Sri Lanka pending improvement of the human rights situation there.

West Indies

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreig and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance the Overse Development Administration is giving the Windwa Islands and Jamaica to diversify into exports other th bananas over the next decade.

Mrs. Chalker: Assistance for economic diversificati to reduce dependence on bananas has been a significa part of our aid programme to the Windward Islands f many years. Current commitments to agricultur diversification total £3·5 million, and this will be important area for future aid allocations.

Our Jamaica programme focuses on other secto though we are providing a grant of £500,000 for t rehabilitation of smallholder coffee following hurrica damage.

The aid programme also helps with diversification in tourism, through improvements to supporting infrastru ture such as roads and water and electricity supplies, a with training.

Investment by the Commonwealth Developme Corporation—CDC—supports the growth of the coff industry in Jamaica and tourism and processing of loc production for export in the region as a whole. The CD is also assisting the banana industry in Jamaica to increa its productivity and thus to improve its competiti position in the European market.

Malaysia

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreig and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list all offers of a to Malaysia, with the date the offer was made and the da the aid agreement was signed, since 1979.

Mrs. Chalker: The information requested cannot provided in the form requested by the hon. Lady, but I c confirm that offers of aid have been made to t Government of Malaysia since 1979 in respect of t following aid and trade provision—ATP—projects an where aid agreements have been signed, a date, if know has been added:

Offers made for ATP projects and date of aid agreement (only six offers have so far resulted in an aid agreement)

Sungei Ahning Dam—28 December 1984
Cross Braced Rail Bogies—31 July 1986
Rural Water Schemes—28 August 1986
Sandakan Power Station—4 March 1989
Nucleus Hospitals—13 July 1990
View data—date not readily available
Pergau Hydro Electric Station
Connaught Bridge Power Station
Sibu Airport
Utora University
Digital Multiplex Equipment
Labuan/Sabah Submarine Cable
Load Despatch Centres
Locomotives
Railway Braking System
Air Navigation Equipment
Peninsular Gas
Optical Fibre Telecommunications
Sarawak Transmission
Sungai Piah Hydro Electric Station
Transmission Switchgear

East-West Malay Submarine Cable
Indoor Substations
Offshore Gas Development
Gas Turbine Generators
NEB Consultancy Port Klang Power Station
Bersia/Kenering Hydro Electric Station
Submarine Telecommuncations
Switchgear for NEB
Bataing AI
Paka Power Station
Circulating Water Plant
3KV Transmission Switchgear
Communications Equipment
132KV Transmission Switchgear
Submarine Telephone Cable
Peninsular Gas Phase II

Offers made for ATP/Technical Co-operation Projects and Date of Agreement (only six offers have so far resulted in an aid agreement).

Airport Study—19 August 1980.
Privatisation Programme—23 June 1988.
Ulu Jelai Feasibility Study—March 1985 (exact date not readily available).
Liwagu Hydro Electric Study—16 September 1987.
Rural Water Supply Supervision—11 September 1987.
Medamit 2 Study—15 October 1990.
Railways Double Tracking.
Meteorological Study.
Hill Resort Road.
Islamic University Master Plan Study.
Islamic University Socio-Economic Study.
Peninsular Gas Phase II.
Selangor Pipeline Rehabilitation Study.
Air Traffic Control Consultancy.
Aluminium Smelter Study.
Copper Complex Feasibility Study.
Engineering Complex Feasibility Study.
Nenggiri Hydro Electric Consultancy.
Power Generation Feasibility Study.
Rail Training.
Transformers for NEB.
Urea Plant Consultancy.

In addition to ATP activities we have provided various technical co-operation inputs under our regular aid programme for Malaysia. The major elements in the regular aid programme are provision of experts and volunteers and training for students and other trainees. Information on the total number of man years for each of these categories is given in the table.

Year	*Experts and Volunteers (man years)*	*Student and Trainees (man years)*
1979	97	164
1980	56	171
1981	46	100
1982	43	76
1983	33	89
1984	29	114
1985	34	86
1986	42	100
1987	35	103
1988	33	105
1989	33	110

Sahara

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what relief aid has been given to the Saharans who are currently living in camps in Algeria having fled from western Sahara following its invasion by Morocco.

Mrs. Chalker: We are not providing any relief aid to the camps in Algeria.

Aid Focus

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will set out the evidence on which the Minister for Overseas Development based her statement of 8 November that British aid is focused on the poorest sectors and people within poor countries.

Mrs. Chalker *[holding answer 16 November 1990]:* In my speech to the Refugee Council annual conference on 8 November, I said that the Government were focusing their growing assistance on the poorest countries, on the poorest groups within those countries, and the most vulnerable. In 1989 over 70 per cent. of our gross bilateral aid went to the poorest 50 countries compared with 63 per cent. in 1986. The report of the Public Accounts Committee published on 18 June 1990 recognised that the ODA's efforts to engage in direct poverty alleviation projects were yielding results. In India alone, our commitments to poverty alleviation activities now amount to £130 million with a further £60 million under consideration.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will set out the evidence on which the Minister for Overseas Development based her statement of 8 November that British aid is becoming more and more project orientated.

Mrs. Chalker: I have no recollection of using the words quoted by the hon. Member.

Brazil

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions were held on human rights abuse, particularly of Yanomani people, with Brazilian officials during the visit to Brazil of the Minister for Overseas Development.

Mrs. Chalker *[holding answer 16 November 1990]:* We have consistently made clear to the Brazilian authorities our views on human rights abuse. During my visit I took the opportunity to discuss with Foreign Minister Rezek the concerns of both Governments about securing a viable future for indigenous peoples including the Yanomani. We understand that the Brazilian authorities are instituting measures which should be helpful in safeguarding indigenous rights.

Aid Expenditure

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the decision was made that poverty, population and environment are the top priorities for British aid; what proportion of aid was spent on each of these in 1989 and the current year; and how the decision will be reflected in aid expenditure in 1991 and in future years.

Mrs. Chalker *[holding answer 16 November 1990]:* The alleviation of poverty has been a major aim of the aid programme under successive Governments. Recently we have been giving increasing priority to growth and addressing environmental issues. I see these as interrelated issues requiring increasing attention.

In 1989 a total of £17·3 million was spent on activities directly related to population concerns, a 72 per cent. increase in real terms compared to 1981. In addition most mother and child health and women's education programmes contribute to reducing population growth.

On poverty, I refer the hon. Lady to the answer I gave her on 26 June, at column *125*. On environment, ODA procedures now rightly require that the evaluation of all projects takes account of environmental considerations. The increasing priority given to the issue is reflected in the fact that whereas in 1988 the Government were financing around 80 forestry projects at a cost to the aid programme of £45 million, we currently have in place or in preparation over 200 projects at a cost of some £165 million. Figures for 1990 and future years are not available.

TRANSPORT

Fuel-Burning Trains

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what powers his Department has to control and issue guidelines to British Rail regarding the use of fuel-burning trains in urban areas.

Mr. McLoughlin: Operational aspects of motive power are a matter for British Rail. Enforcement of controls under the Clean Air Act 1956 on emissions of dark smoke is by local authorities. Under the Environmental Protection Act 1990, railway engines other than steam locomotives could become subject to statutory nuisance action by local authorities or individuals.

British Rail

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he will approve British Rail's proposals for new class 159 vehicles for the Waterloo to Exeter route.

Mr. Freeman: The passengers who use the Waterloo-Exeter route are currently getting a service which is below the standard they are entitled to expect, in spite of the best efforts of Network SouthEast managers and staff.

The replacement of the old and unreliable trains on the line has been a priority for both British Rail and the Government.

British Rail put to me a sound case for 69 class 159 vehicles to be introduced on the Waterloo-Exeter route, most of which will be converted class 158s, and I approved its proposal today.

It means that passengers can look forward to a modern, reliable and comfortable service at least a year sooner than would otherwise have been possible.

Disabled People (Vehicle Excise Duty)

Sir David Price: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many disabled people in 1989 applied successfully to claim a refund of vehicle excise duty or exemption from the payment of vehicle excise duty.

Mr. Chope: During the period April 1989 to March 1990 there were approximately 22,000 successful first-time claims by disabled people for refunds of vehicle excise duty. There are currently over 350,000 disabled persons claiming exemption from vehicle excise duty.

Rolling Stock, Kent

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for Tr if he will make a statement on his policy with regar supply of the new Networker rolling stock for commuter lines serving north-west Kent; and if make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: I fully support Network Sou programme of investment in the Kent Link lines. of 400 Networker trains were approved in August a cost of over £290 million with approval for a furt in principle. My right hon. Friend the Secretary has endorsed the 12-car Networker strategy for Ke routes. Infrastructure improvements at a cost of ov million are going ahead and more rolling stock is be ordered. I understand that the first class 465 Ne is due for delivery to Kent Link in September 19

Tachograph Charts

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of S Transport when he expects to reach a decision ab serialisation of tachograph charts.

Mr. Chope: I hope to be able to announce a soon.

Warwick Gardens, Peckham

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of St Transport when the Minister of State will visit W Gardens in Peckham.

Mr. Freeman: It is, of course, for British propose a route for a new rail link between the tunnel and London.

However, I intend to visit Warwick Gardens, wh in the Dulwich constituency, at a time of conveni my hon. Friend the Member for Dulwich (Mr. Be

NORTHERN IRELAND

Enterprise Ulster

Mr. Kilfedder: To ask the Secretary of St Northern Ireland how many staff of Enterprise Ul to be declared redundant in 1990 and 1991; and ho of these are remunerated within the range £7 £12,000 per annum.

Mr. Needham: Fifty, of whom 49 are likely to b £7,000 to £12,000 per annum wages or salary ran precise position will not be known until after the offer of voluntary redundancy to all staff closes November 1990.

Mr. Kilfedder: To ask the Secretary of St Northern Ireland what kinds of material u Enterprise Ulster have been conveyed to the privat of staff members for the purpose of material testi long the testing lasted; and when reports on the tes were submitted and to whom.

Mr. Needham: The only known material conve member of staff's private home, for the pur material testing, was Colfix bitumen emulsion. Thi December 1980, with the results of the exp published in January 1981 and circulated management.

The Colfix bitumen and the small quantity of stones used were paid for by the member of staff.

Mr. Kilfedder: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many staff of Enterprise Ulster whose remuneration is in excess of £12,000 per annum are to be transferred to other work in the Government service; how many are to be retained in Enterprise Ulster; and how many are to be declared redundant.

Mr. Needham: Enterprise Ulster is a statutory body established in 1973. As such, there are no arrangements in place which allow its staff to be transferred to other work in the Government service. Of the up to 50 staff being made redundant in 1990 and 1991, it is likely that there may be one whose remuneration is in excess of £12,000 per annum.

Mr. Kilfedder: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what projects were undertaken by Enterprise Ulster in 1988 and 1989; and what was the total cost of each, showing separately the amount contributed by the client or sponsor and the value placed on unused materials returned to Enterprise Ulster depots.

Mr. Needham: In the 1988-89 financial year, Enterprise Ulster undertook 385 projects at a total gross cost of £2,083,124 to which clients contributed £419,663. In 1989-90, a total of 312 projects were undertaken at a total gross cost of £913,446 to which clients contributed £219,881. No record is kept of unused materials which were either returned to the client or on agreement, transferred to another project of the client or if purchased by Enterprise Ulster, returned to its depots.

Details of the projects undertaken in the two years, along with Enterprise Ulster's expenditure and income from clients have been placed in the Library of the House.

Energy Connections

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what progress has been made in establishing whether provision of *(a)* a natural gas pipeline and *(b)* an electricity connector between Northern Ireland and Great Britain is likely to be feasible; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: The technical and economic feasibility of using gas for power generation is currently being assessed. Several possible routes for a pipeline from Great Britain are being examined and sea bed surveys have been completed. Initial discussions have been held with a number of natural gas suppliers.

On an electricity interconnector, discussions are continuing between Northern Ireland Electricity and Scottish Power.

Saltwater Bridge, Kircubbin

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many traffic accidents there have been in each of the past five years and in the first 10 months of 1990 in the vicinity of Saltwater bridge, Rowreagh road, Kircubbin, County Down; how many persons were injured; how many persons were killed; and what proposals he has to improve road safety at this location.

Mr. Needham: Recorded accidents at Saltwater bridge, Rowreagh road, Kircubbin, are as follows:

Year	Number of accidents	Number of persons killed/injured
1985	0	
1986	0	
1987	1	[1]1
1988	0	
1989	1	[1]1
[3]1990	1	[2]1

[1] Injured.
[2] Killed.
[3] To date.

A minor road realignment scheme which will enhance road safety at this location is due to commence towards the end of the next financial year.

Poverty and Deprivation

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what measures the Government will introduce to reduce the level of poverty and deprivation in Northern Ireland, following the report of the Child Poverty Action Group.

Mr. Needham: The Government aim to provide an effective system of financial help; extra resources being targeted on those most in need. Following the reform of social security in April 1988, which gave increased levels of support to families with children, there have been other improvements, including increased help from October 1989 for disabled and older pensioners on income support or housing benefit and higher limits on savings from April 1990. There will be a general benefits uprating next April, including a real increase in the basic pensioner premium for people aged 60 to 74 on income support or housing benefit and substantial extra income support for many people being cared for in independent homes. The Government have also announced plans to improve the framework of benefits for disabled people. Additionally, the decision to set up a Social Security Agency in Northern Ireland is intended further to improve the quality and responsiveness of service to those in need of help.

District Heating

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what action the Northern Ireland Housing Executive is taking as a result of the offer British Coal has made to assume responsibility for the improvement and operation of certain district heating schemes in Northern Ireland.

Dr. Mawhinney: The chairman of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive has informed me that the executive has rejected the British Coal proposals in view of the high level of subsidy which the proposals required.

ENVIRONMENT

Land Registration

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what circular or communication he has made to local authorities concerning future registration of public sector land; what categories of existing use such proposals cover; and for what purpose.

Mr. Atkins: My Department issued on 12 September a consultation paper which invited the comments of the

local authority associations and others interested on our proposals for encouraging the use of vacant public sector land. One of the proposals was for a statutory duty on local authorities and other public sector bodies to keep, and make accessible to the public, registers of their unused and underused land on a broadly similar basis to those requested under the code of practice issued in August 1989. Copies of the consultation paper have been placed in the Library. The responses are now being considered.

Part VIII of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 places a duty on local authorities to keep a register of potentially contaminated land in their areas whether publicly or privately owned. Copies of a report on the methodology for identifying such land, "Pilot Survey of Potentially Contaminated Land in Cheshire", were sent to all local authorities in July.

Satellite Dishes

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many representations he has received in the current year concerning planning applications for the siting of satellite dishes.

Mr. Atkins: This information is not readily available. Virtually all of the substantial number of letters received on this subject are concerned with the environmental impact of satellite dishes erected under permitted development rights (for which a specific planning application is unnecessary). The consultation, earlier this year, over proposed changes to the permitted development rights for satellite dishes produced nearly 600 responses.

National Stadium

Mr. Butcher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment in the light of the recommendation of the Taylor report and the separate need for a national stadium in the 21st century, what form of public financial support would be available to supplement private sector investment in such a facility in the west midlands.

Mr. Atkins: The Government's priority is the introduction of all seating accommodation in line with Lord Justice Taylor's recommendations. Substantial funds are being made available to the Football Trust from the reduction in pool betting duty. It is for other public authorities in the area to decide their own investment priorities.

Limehouse Link Road

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will break down the estimated £142 million cost of the Limehouse link road into its principal components, including rehousing costs and relocation of businesses; what contracts have now been concluded for construction and associated work, with the names of the respective companies and amounts of the relevant tenders; and what further contracts remain to be concluded.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The figure of £142 million was the estimated cost of the Limehouse link road, prepared by LDDC in 1988, prior to tendering in 1989. It relates to construction costs only. The main construction contract was awarded in September 1989 at a value of £220 million to a joint venture of Balfour Beatty Construction Ltd. and Fairclough Civil Engineering Ltd. Subcontra matter for the main contractors, and the d confidential to them.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of Stat Environment what response he has received to th standard spending assessment announcements f authorities.

Mr. Key: Consultations on the local go finance settlement for 1991-92 will continue November. The representations received to date authorities have shown that the large proposed in standard spending assessments are welcomed, also included a number of detailed comments c points.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of the Environment (1) what proposals he has for e clothing, bedding, furniture and basic equipm seizure by private bailiffs enforcing the communi

(2) what proposals he has to amend the Co Charges (Administration and Enforcement) Re 1989 to bring controls on bailiffs enforcing the co charge into line with those applying for distress

Mr. Key: My Department does not propose any changes to the Community Charges (Admi and Enforcement) Regulations 1989 as regard employed by local authorities. We have issued the employment of bailiffs by local authoriti included the suggestion that authorities sho guidelines to bailiffs on their mode of ope understand that the Institute of Revenues Ra Valuation will shortly be issuing a practice note include details of property which it is unl imprudent to distrain.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of the Environment what proposals he has for private bailiffs enforcing the community charge written authorisation from the local authority.

Mr. Key: The Community Charges (Admi and Enforcement) Regulations 1989 already bailiff to show the debtor the written authorisati received from the local authority if requested to

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of the Environment if he will publish figures sho 1990-91 the average amount in £ sterling per wee percentage of earnings accounted for by the co charge for (i) a single person, (ii) a single-earne couple without children, (iii) a single-earner couple with two children and (iv) a two-earne couple on *(a)* 50 per cent., *(b)* 75 per cent., *(c)* cent., *(d)* 150 per cent., *(e)* 200 per cent., *(f)* 300 *(g)* 400 per cent., *(h)* 500 per cent., *(i)* 700 per *(j)* 1,000 per cent. of average earnings.

Mr. Key: I regret that it is not possible to satisfactory estimates of the amount paid in co charge by households of differing incomes. The paid will vary according to the area in w households live; their entitlement to transitional r their entitlement to community charge rebate.

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many people have been exempted from paying the community charge in each category of exemption in the London borough of Camden.

Mr. Portillo: Information returned by the authority on the number of exempt persons over 18 in the London borough of Camden at 1 June 1990 is as follows:

	Number
Severely mentally impaired	57
Aged 18 or 19[1]	66
Members of religious communities	47
In hospital or home[2]	1,550
Persons without fixed abode	200
Other[3]	28

[1] Aged 18 who attract child benefit because they are still at school or aged 18 or 19 and on full-time courses of further, but not higher, education.

[2] People whose sole or main residence is in an NHS hospital, in a residential care home, a nursing home, a mental nursing home, a private hospital or a hostel providing a substantial level of care, and who are also being treated or cared for in such an institution.

[3] People in detention, members of visiting forces, international headquarters and defence organisations, and their dependants (including diplomats), residential care workers employed at a very low salary, and full-time students whose term time address is in Scotland or Northern Ireland. These categories have been combined because of the small numbers involved.

Ince B Power Station

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from local authorities in Gwynedd and Clwyd concerning the environmental effects of the proposed burning of Orimulsion fuel at Ince B power station; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I have received one letter about Ince power station from Gwynedd county council which was forwarded to my Department by the hon. Member for Caernarfon.

Leybucht Bay

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many of his *(a)* legal and *(b)* other staff will be sent as observers to the European Court of Justice in Luxembourg on 5 December in respect of the Leybucht bay case;

(2) what policy considerations led him to decide to associate the United Kingdom Government with the German Government as defendants in the Leybucht bay case brought by the European Commission for infringement of the European Community wild birds directive;

(3) how many of his *(a)* legal and *(b)* other staff were sent as observers to the European Court of Justice in Luxembourg on 16 October on the occasion of the preliminary hearing of the Leybucht bay case.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The United Kingdom intervened in case C57/89 brought by the European Commission against the German Government on two grounds. First, we believe that the Commission is not entitled to rely upon any presumption of fact and should be required to place before the court the evidence needed to support its case that a member state has not fulfilled an obligation under Community law. Secondly, the Commission interprets article 4 of the wild birds directive EEC 79/409 as imposing an absolute prohibition on any activity or development within a special protection area (SPA) which might cause significant pollution or deterioration of habitat or disturbance to the birds, with the sole exception of works which are strictly necessary to protect human health or safety. We consider this interpretation to be contrary to the wording and intention of the directive, and unacceptable in principle.

Two members of my Department's staff attended the hearing of this case on 16 October in support of counsel together with an officer of the Treasury Solicitor's Department. The Welsh Office and South Glamorgan county council also each sent an observer. There are no plans for anyone to attend the European Court of Justice in Luxembourg on 5 December.

Information requested relating to the total cost to public funds of the United Kingdom intervention in this case is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answers of 12 and 13 November, when he will be in a position to estimate the total cost to public funds of the Government's decision to associate themselves legally with the German Government as a co-defendant against the European Commission in the Leybucht bay case.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory *[holding answer 16 November 1990]:* I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave him earlier today.

Local Authority Employees

Mr. Holt: To ask the Secretary of State, for the Environment how many town or county hall employees, except teachers, are recorded as having been made redundant in each of the past 10 years.

Mr. Key: My Department does not collect this information.

Interim Development Order Sites

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary State for the Environment whether he proposes to introduce any controls on interim development order sites in respect of *(a)* opencast mining, *(b)* quarrying and *(c)* any other purpose; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: The Minerals Act 1981 provides an opportunity for mineral planning authorities to review interim development orders and other early planning permissions for mineral working and to make orders updating them where appropriate. There are no proposals to introduce further controls, but we are reviewing the operation of the Minerals Act 1981, as announced in "This Common Inheritance".

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received regarding interim development order sites; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: The Department is aware of the recent concern about interim development order permissions and has received a number of representations from those affected by them.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has visited any interim development order sites in the last 12 months; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: My right hon. Friend has not visited any interim development order sites in the last 12 months, but I shall be visiting a number of mineral sites during the course of next year to see operating conditions at first hand.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many interim development order sites exist in England; and if he will list full details in the *Official Report*.

Mr. Atkins: All permissions granted under interim development orders before 21 July 1943 have lapsed, but permissions applied for, and granted on or after that date and before 1 July 1948 were preserved by section 77 of the 1947 Act and by subsequent legislation.

No records of applications made under interim development orders were required and no information about the total number of permissions granted is currently available. Such records as there are of such permissions will be held by the successor planning authority and we are discussing the information currently available with the local authority associations.

Workplace Accidents

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the reported accidents involving lifting while working received by his Department with regard to local government employees for 1986, 1987, 1988 and 1989 showing distribution by age and sex, occupation, incidence rates based on population of England and place of accident.

Mr. Key: My Department receives no such reports.

Mortgages

Sir Ian Gilmour: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his latest estimate of the number of families with dependent children who have mortgages; and what was the comparable figure in 1979.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The estimated numbers of households in England with dependent children (aged under 16, or under 19 if in full-time education) buying with a mortgage, were 3·1 million in 1979 and 3·6 million in 1988. These figures are derived from the general household survey.

Disabled Facilities Grants

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what evidence his Department has of the impact of the system of contribution repayments towards disabled facilities grants, set out in circular 10/90 (paragraphs 17, 18 and 67), on the financial situation of disabled persons and their families and on the expenditure of local authorities that waive loan repayments.

Mr. Key: I have no evidence to suggest that the system is not working as intended, which is to ensure that the resources available for grants are used as effectively as possible. All aspects of the new renovation grant system will however be kept under review.

Apple Orchards

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary o Environment what steps he is taking t protection of orchards containing rare varie and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Currently we are wide-ranging review of tree preservation legislation. A consultation exercise will shortly, providing an opportunity for com and other issues to be considered in that bro In addition, I understand that my right ho Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food fund the national fruit collection at Br contains some 2,300 varieties of apple.

North Sea (Dumping)

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary o Environment if he will take steps to preve dumping by oil companies of radioactive w rigs into the North sea; and if he will make

Mr. Trippier: Disposals of small amounts waste from oil installations in the North sea a under the Radioactive Substances Act Majesty's inspectorate of pollution (HMIP) the Secretary of State for the Environment Majesty's industrial pollution inspectorate behalf of the Secretary of State for Scotland. are considered on a case-by-case basis a authorisation is issued HMIP or HMIPI satisfied that disposals will not present a radiological hazard.

World Climate Conference

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of Environment what results were achieved a world climate conference; and if he will make

Mr. Chris Patten: The second world clima was a major forward in the internationa climate change. Following a week's meeting issues, Ministers from some 137 countri declaration which called for an early start on on a framework convention on climate c completed by 1992. We fully support this ag will play an active part in the negotiations w February 1991.

The conference endorsed the need for a gl to respond to climate change, involving the of all nations. To enable developing countries full part in this, the declaration recognises financial and technological assistance from t lised countries.

The declaration also welcomed the comm European Community and its member states developed countries to take action aimed emissions of greenhouse gases, and particu dioxide. It urged all developed countries national strategies to limit emissions of gree

This conference involved 137 nations, mor comparable gathering, and the agreements give added impetus to the work of developin and realistic global response to climate cha the 1992 United Nations conference on envi development.

EMPLOYMENT

Unit Labour Costs

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give, for each year from 1974, an index of the rise in unit labour costs in the United Kingdom, the United States of America, France, the Federal Republic of Germany and Japan *(a)* in local currency and *(b)* adjusted for changes in relative exchange rates.

Mr. Jackson: Statistics on unit labour costs in the whole economy are not available. International comparisons of unit labour costs in manufacturing industries are made periodically by the international monetary fund. The latest available data from this source are set out in the tables:

TABLE 1: Manufacturing Unit Labour Costs in Local Currency

	United Kingdom	*United States of America*	*France*	*Federal Republic of Germany*	*Japan*
					Index 1985 = 100
1974	30·7	59·3	35·3	68·5	89·0
1975	41·7	63·5	42·9	73·1	102·1
1976	46·2	65·6	46·5	73·8	102·3
1977	51·9	69·4	49·1	78·0	106·4
1978	59·6	74·5	53·0	81·5	105·0
1979	70·3	82·0	57·4	83·7	105·2
1980	85·9	91·6	65·6	90·2	104·7
1981	93·5	98·2	73·8	94·5	108·6
1982	96·6	104·3	82·7	97·7	107·7
1983	95·3	101·1	87·9	97·0	105·3
1984	96·5	99·7	94·2	98·1	101·2
1985	100·0	100·0	100·0	100·0	100·0
1986	103·8	100·8	101·9	105·0	103·3
1987	103·8	99·5	101·8	111·5	98·0
1988	106·1	100·8	100·0	111·0	94·5
1989	110·7	101·6	101·3	112·2	95·3

TABLE 2: Manufacturing Unit Labour Costs Adjusted for Changes in Relative Exchange Rates.

	United Kingdom	*United States of America*	*France*	*Federal Republic of Germany*	*Japan*
					Index 1985 = 100
1974	78·7	82·8	91·8	107·3	110·6
1975	84·4	74·4	104·8	101·0	106·9
1976	76·8	78·2	104·7	102·1	107·4
1977	76·5	76·0	97·3	108·3	114·7
1978	83·0	68·9	97·2	111·9	128·0
1979	98·6	68·4	99·2	112·2	109·2
1980	122·0	69·2	103·9	110·2	93·0
1981	124·2	79·3	99·2	100·0	102·9
1982	114·9	89·3	96·7	101·7	91·0
1983	103·7	92·5	94·4	103·1	98·9
1984	99·6	98·9	96·0	101·6	101·3
1985	100·0	100·0	100·0	100·0	100·0
1986	92·9	77·2	102·5	112·5	125·1
1987	90·4	65·8	101·4	126·8	125·5
1988	98·4	63·2	97·2	125·8	133·1
1989	97·9	65·8	94·9	123·0	127·0

Source: International Monetary Fund

Earnings

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State Employment whether he will publish a table showing each year since 1970 and for the latest month the num of full-time adult males and females in employm together with the number of part-time wor distinguishing between manual and other workers between manufacturing, other production industries non-production industries; and if he will add figures non-adult workers and for the self-employed.

Mr. Jackson: I shall write to the hon. Gentleman place a copy of my reply in the Library.

Sir Ian Gilmour: To ask the Secretary of State Employment how many and what percentages of full-t employed *(a)* men and *(b)* women, and of part-t employed (i) men and (ii) women, earned less than £3 hour in April 1990.

Mr. Jackson: The available information on th earning less than £3 per hour in the new earnings sur (NES) sample is published in table 20 of part A of the 1 NES report.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State Employment whether he will publish a table showing numbers employed in *(a)* banking and bill discounti *(b)* house and estate agents and *(c)* legal services.

Mr. Jackson: The information is given in the table. Estimates for the legal services industry can be deriv only from censuses of employment. The latest availa census figures are for September 1987.

Employees in Employment *Industries (SIC 1980)*	*Great Britain Thousands*
June 1990	
Banking and Bill Discounting (Group 814)	503·9
House and Estate Agents (Group 834)	109·3
September 1987	
Legal Services (Group 835)	165·3

Industrial Tribunals

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State f Employment if part-time chairmen of industrial tribuna have been stopped from hearing cases; what is the curre waiting time for a hearing date; and to what extent t waiting time has changed in recent months.

Mr. Forth: Restrictions on the use of part-tin chairmen were lifted on 9 November. Information recent waiting times is not yet available.

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State f Employment how much further funding has been receive by the industrial tribunals; and what plans he has to revie the amount further in the rest of the financial year.

Mr. Forth: The budget of the industrial tribunals (England and Wales) has been increased by £750,000. This will enable the tribunals to operate normally for the rest of the financial year.

Enterprise Allowance Scheme

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give for the enterprise allowance scheme *(a)* the number of entrants and *(b)* the total expenditure for each of the years 19 1989-90 and 1990-91 and for each of the st Scotland and Wales.

Mr. Forth *[holding answer 12 Novem* regional breakdown of entrants for each the table. Because of changes in scheme separate data for London are not availa 1989. Expenditure information was pr national summary level up to that point. of the programme budget went on allo and estimates are included based on entr

Region	*1987-88*		*1988-89*		*1989-90*		*1*
	Entrants	*Expenditure (£ million)*	*Entrants*	*Expenditure (£ million)*	*Entrants*	*Expenditure (£ million)*	*12 Ent*
London	—	—	—	—	8,999	19·74	
South East	—	—	—	—	8,264	17·59	
Western Division			6,473	13·32	—	—	
Eastern Division	24,514	45·04	8,224	16·19	—	—	
Southern Division			7,450	15·98	—	—	
South West	11,262	20·84	10,344	20·9	7,335	17·24	
West Midlands	10,537	19·45	9,677	19·15	7,691	17·24	
East Midlands and Eastern	11,562	20·32	9,656	19·05	7,879	17·54	
Yorkshire and Humberside	10,198	18·89	9,935	19·26	8,169	17·44	
North West	15,955	30·34	15,311	29·82	12,263	26·96	
Northern	5,729	11·07	5,938	12·08	4,881	10·67	
Wales	6,654	12·04	6,942	12·92	5,433	12·41	
Scotland	9,894	17·91	8,572	17·62	6,972	14·97	
Totals	106,305	195·9	98,522	196·3	77,886	171·8	

HEALTH

NHS Trusts

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what rules govern membership of trusts and health authorities to ensure that there is no conflict of interest.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The NHS Trusts (Membership and Procedure) Regulations SI No. 1990/2024, as amended, govern the appointment of trust chairmen and directors. The Regional and District Health Authorities (Membership and Procedure) Regulations SI No. 1990/1331 govern the appointment of health authority chairmen and members. The provisions of these regulations together with general guidance issued by the Department are intended to ensure that conflicts of interest do not arise for members of health authorities or directors of NHS trusts.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether additional funds were made available to community health councils for consultation on self-governing trusts.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Responding to consultation on the provision of health services is part of the normal function of community health councils. Additional funds have not been made available for consultation on self-governing trusts.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of S what representations have been received *(b)* regional health authorities about the allowed for consultation on self-governin

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: A number of received. We are satisfied that three appropriate length of time for consultatio

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of S if he will place in the Library the report o Thames regional health authority on lo about the application for self-governing t Guy's hospital, Lewisham hospital and services and *(b)* St. Thomas's hospital.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Responses to available from regional health authoritie those commenting have made it clear tha so privately.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of S (1) which regional health authorities held as part of the consultation about self-gov

(2) which regional health autho exhibitions as part of their consultations o trust status.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: It is for regio trust applicants to determine the ran consulted formally and the way in consulted. The methods used in consu region are publicly available from authorities.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he will announce his decision about which applications for self-governing status will be granted.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: My right hon. Friend will announce his decision soon.

General Practitioners, Trent

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many general practitioner fund-holding practices will be given the go ahead in the Trent region; on what criteria; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Practices which applied by 1 November this year to join the scheme will need to satisfy the conditions laid down in the National Health Service (Fund-Holding Practices) (Applications and Recognition) Regulations 1990. I understand that 28 practices in the Trent region are currently undertaking the preparatory work necessary to become fund holders. It will be for the region to decide which practices meet the criteria for recognition.

Hospital Beds

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the number of national health service beds in use, in *(a)* the acute sector and *(b)* totally in each year from 1979 to 1989; and what is the current figure.

Mr. Dorrell: The information requested is given in the table. The latest available figures show that in 1989-90 almost 7·5 million in-patient cases were treated. On a comparable basis, just over 6 million in-patient cases were treated in 1979—a rise of nearly 25 per cent.

Average daily available beds in England

	Acute sector (Thousands)	*Total (Thousands)*
1979	149	362
1980	146	356
1981	145	352
1982	144	348
1983	142	343
1984	139	335
1985	136	325
1986	133	316
1987-88	128	297
1988-89	123	281
1989-90	121	270

Source:
SH3 return 1979-1986
KHO3 return 1987-88—1989-90

Abortion

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has concerning the rate of sterility caused by infections among women who have had abortions.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The information requested is not collected centrally.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has concerning the number of licensed abortion agencies which currently routinely screen potential clients for chlamydia infection.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The information requested is not routinely collected. We are aware, however, that some pregnancy advice agencies test their clients for chla infection prior to the insertion of intrauterine device in connection with infertility treatment.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of Sta Health if he will make a statement outlining the which have been taken by his Department to redu incidence of pelvic inflammatory disease and blockage following chlamydia infection during abo

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The form of treatment individual case is a matter for the clinical judgment doctor concerned.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of Sta Health what guidance he has given to the Brook adv service and other abortion agencies in the last 20 about the need routinely to screen in advance chlamydia their potential abortion clients and to pres where appropriate, a course of antibiotics; and what he has taken to ensure that these guidelines are follo

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Brook advisory serv not registered as a pregnancy advice bureau. No guidance has been issued to Brook or any regis bureaux. The appropriateness of any particular test individual case is a matter for the clinical judgment o doctor concerned.

Residential Care

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for He what advice has been given by his Department to age concerned with the provision of drug and alcohol ser with regard to the funding of residential care after 1 A 1993.

Mr. Dorrell: None. We are currently consulting a the specific grant to local authorities. Under the ph introduction of community care local authorities expected to produce their plans, after consultation April 1992. Detailed arrangements for funding reside care for alcohol and drug misusers after 1 April 1993 yet to be decided.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for He what action his Department is able to take in the ever a local authority being unable to meet its duty to pro or arrange residential accommodation for elderly peop need of care and attention not otherwise available.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The provision of reside care is a local authority responsibility. They are expe to give priority to the discharge of their statutory du My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has def powers which can be used if a local authority fails to f its statutory duty under the National Assistance Act 1 to provide residential care to people in need of care attention which is not otherwise available to them.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for He what plans he has to introduce legislation to ext registration procedures to small residential homes.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We remain committed seeking an early opportunity for legislation to bring th small homes under regulatory control.

Service Providers (Voluntary Sector)

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Hea what assessment has been made by his Department of resource implications for service providers in the volunt

sector of the implementation of the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990; and what financial assistance is being made available to them by the Government.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Although grants are available from central and local government to voluntary sector provider agencies, our community care proposals urge local authorities to contract for services with voluntary sector providers. Guidance will stress the important role of local authorities in encouraging and facilitating the work of the voluntary sector. Authorities will still be able to offer grant support for non-service aspects of voluntary sector work.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if it is his intention to issue guidelines on the implementation of the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990, for use of providers of services in the voluntary sector.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Department will shortly issue policy guidance on community care which will be supplemented by practice advice from the social services inspectorate. Both guidance and practice advice will be addressed to health and local authorities and the Department intends that they will be of interest to all community care agencies, including voluntary and private sector providers.

Drug and Alcohol Services

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment he has made of the implications of the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990 for the assessment of care management of clients with drug and alcohol problems where there is a need for access to a national network of services to be maintained and a requirement for the provision of funding across existing local authority and health authority boundaries.

Mr. Dorrell: The policy guidance which is to be issued soon will emphasise the need for local authorities and health authorities to work together. The assessment of clients with alcohol and drug problems will need to take account of the range of services provided within the area or available elsewhere.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what response has been made by his Department following representations from agencies regarding the omission from the National Health Service and Community Care Act of provisions to take account of the special needs of drug and alcohol services.

Mr. Dorrell: Section 7E of the Local Authorities Social Services Act 1970 (inserted by section 50 of the NHS and Community Care Act 1990) empowers my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to make specific grants to local authorities. One of these grants will be for voluntary organisations providing services for alcohol and drug misusers. The grant in 1991-92 will support expenditure of £2 million.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if it is the Government's intention to issue guidelines concerning the resolution of disputes between agencies over the responsibility for funding services for people with drug or alcohol problems, under the provisions of the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990.

Mr. Dorrell: Guidance which is to be issued soon will emphasise the need for joint working between all agencies concerned with funding community care services. There was wide-ranging consultation including voluntary and statutory authorities. Where there is dispute between health authorities and local authorities, advice may be sought from regional health authorities and the social services inspectorate.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what provision is being made by his Department under the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990 to ensure that a uniform system for the assessment of persons with drug or alcohol problems is developed across the United Kingdom in order to avoid clients facing several assessments from various agencies before being offered appropriate services.

Mr. Dorrell: It is not the Government's intention to prescribe the detailed assessment procedures; these will be for local authorities to develop in partnership with other agencies. In assessing the social and health care needs of their residents, local and health authorities will need to ensure that people with alcohol or drug problems have access to a range of services which may be provided within the area or elsewhere. Where a specialist service is provided by a voluntary body under contract with a local authority, it will be possible for the contractual arrangements to include delegation of the assessment function.

King's College Hospital

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if the King's College hospital day surgery block will be used for national health service patients.

Mr. Dorrell: Yes.

Eye Tests

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the number of national health service eye tests carried out between 1 April 1989 and 31 March 1990.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The number of NHS sight tests paid for by family health services authorities (formally family practitioner committees) in England and Wales between 1 April 1989 and 31 March 1990 was 5·572 million.

This figure includes approximately 1·7 million sight tests which were carried out before 1 April 1989 but paid for after that date.

Listeria Monocytogenes

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research has been carried out to investigate the proposition that listeria monocytogenes, damaged by heating and growing in chilled conditions, are more infectious and dangerous than normal listeria monocytogenes.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 12 November 1990]:* Research at the university of Würzburg, Germany has indicated that levels of haemolysin (a haemolysin is a chemical produced by bacteria which damages or destroys red blood cells (and other mammalian cells)) in some listeria monocytogenes (Lm) have been increased

following recovery after heat shock. The production of haemolysin by some strains of Lm has been shown to be a marker for virulence in animals and tissue culture, and is believed to be relevant to the ability of the micro-organisms to cause disease in humans. However, the observed higher incidence of haemolysin following heat shock was followed by further work with certain strains of Lm. This showed no increase in virulence for animals or tissue cultures, suggesting that an increased level of haemolysin produced by the micro-organism may not be important in producing disease.

Research by other groups has shown that Lm cultured at low temperatures appears to be more virulent in an animal model following intravenous inoculation but not more virulent following introduction into the alimentary tract, that is, oral route.

Research continues into the virulence of this micro-organism at Würzburg and at the Pasteur institute in Paris. In the United Kingdom the public health laboratory service is embarking on work to establish virulence markers and work in this field is also taking place at the Moredun research institute in Edinburgh.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Disablement Benefit Gratuities

3. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the number of disablement benefit gratuities paid to claimants in the parliamentary constituency of Greenock and Port Glasgow, under regulation 13 of the Social Security (Industrial Injuries and Diseases) Miscellaneous Provisions Regulations 1986; and what has been the average amount of such payments.

Mr. Scott: This information is not available.

Child Benefit

4. **Mr. John D. Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the level of child benefit for the first-born child in each of the 12 Community countries.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The table shows that the United Kingdom rate of £7·25 a week is second only to the £7·77 shown for Belgium. From next April the United Kingdom rate will be £8·25.

Rates of child benefit in the 12 European Community states on the birth of a first-born child

Country	*Maximum normal rates*[1] £
Belgium	7·77[2,3]
Denmark	6·36[4]
France	Nil[4]
Germany	3·22
Greece	0·98[2,3,4]
Ireland	2·99
Italy	2·01[2,3,4]
Luxembourg	6·93
Netherlands	5·20
Portugal	2·15[2,4]
Spain	0·34[2,4]
United Kingdom	7·25[4]

[1] Rates quoted are weekly sterling equivalents (most EC countries pay benefits monthly) and have been converted from national currency using purchasing power parity rates. Rates quoted were correct at 1 January 1990.

[2] Benefits based on a contributory principle.
[3] Benefits have an element of means-testing.
[4] Extra amounts payable to certain families, eg, single parents.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what plans he has to ensure that families eligible for income support and the £1 per week increase in child benefit for the first born do not lose all the child benefit increase;

(2) what is his most up-to-date estimate of the numbers of families with children on income support who will lose *(a)* all of the £1 per week in child benefit for the first born announced in the annual uprating, *(b)* 50p to £1 and *(c)* 0 to 50p.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: As a result of the recently announced uprating of social security benefits, more than 99 per cent. of families on income support will see an overall increase in their total benefits from April 1991. In the course of the uprating, increases in all benefits are generally taken fully into account, including the increase in child benefit paid to about 1·2 million families on income support. Insufficient information is available to estimate the number of families whose income support will be affected by less than £1 per week but this number is thought to be very low. There are no plans for changing the way child benefit is treated in income support.

Family Credit

7. **Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the average family credit payment and what was the average family income supplement payment in 1978-79 in current prices.

19. **Sir Hal Miller:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the average family credit payment: and what was the average family income supplement payment in 1978-79 in today's prices.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The average amount of family credit in payment is around £30 a week. The average payment of family income supplement in March 1979 was £5·22 or £11·30 at current prices.

18. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many families benefit from family credit; and how many benefited from the predecessor scheme in 1978-79.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The latest available information is for the end of August when the family credit case load was 323,000. This compares with 78,000 families receiving family income supplement at the end of 1978-79.

24. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the latest figure he has for the number of families in receipt of family credit; and what was the comparable figure for family income supplement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The latest information is for the end of August when the family credit case load was 323,000. Family income supplement was in payment to 213,000 families immediately before that scheme came to an end in April 1988.

Invalidity Benefit

14. **Mr. Ashley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he plans to change the gap between invalidity benefit and the take-home pay of the average worker.

Mr. Scott: We have no plans to change the formula for uprating invalidity benefit, which is uprated in line with the retail prices index.

Students (Income Support)

15. **Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to amend the present regulations to enable 19-year-olds in full-time relevant education to claim income support.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: We have no plans to change the income support regulations in this way.

Disabled People

16. **Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many disabled people and their carers have benefited from the Government's reforms made in the current year.

Mr. Scott: More than half a million disabled people and carers have benefited this year from the Government's reforms to disability benefits. Our proposals for improving disability benefits will add some £300 million to spending on disabled people by 1993-94 and will give extra help to an estimated 850,000 people. Spending on disabled people has increased in real terms by more than £4 billion since 1978-79 to a total of £8·3 billion in 1989-90.

22. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many disabled people are paying back social fund loans; how many are paying back with deductions from other benefits; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: As at 31 October 1990, 26,800 people with an income support disability premium were repaying social fund loans. Most of these will have been repaying by deduction from their benefit. A small number may have been repaying by other methods but a precise figure is not available. Since April 1990, 35,000 community care grants have been awarded to people with a disability premium. In 6,600 of these cases a grant was awarded where the application was for a budgeting loan.

Welfare Rights Agencies

20. **Mr. Nicholas Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he has received from welfare rights agencies regarding the availability of his Department's claims forms.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: There have been no such representations since August. New contracts for the national supply and distribution of all forms have been in operation since September.

Pensions

21. **Mr. Donald Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would be the cost of uprating the basic pension by £13 for a single person and £20 for a couple.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: My hon. Friend will be interested to know that the cost to the national insurance fund of uprating the retirement pension in this way would be approximately £6 billion. Such an increase would also mean a rise in the national insurance contributions paid by an employee on average earnings of approximately £2·93 per week and £5·34 for his employer.

Pensioners (Mortgages)

23. **Mr. Tracey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proportion of pensioners make mortgage repayments; and how much of next April's rise in the basic state pension is attributable to rising interest and mortgage rates in the 12 months to September of this year.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Moss) earlier today.

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proportion of pensioners make mortgage repayments; and how much of next April's rise in the basic state pension is attributable to rising interest and mortgage rates in the 12 months to September of this year.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: As my hon. Friend will be aware, the retirement pension will be increased by 10·9 per cent. from April 1991, honouring the Government's commitment to protect fully the value of the state pension against changing prices. The corresponding September figure for the retail prices index less mortgage interest payments was 9·5 per cent. The latest information shows that, in 1987 49 per cent. of pensioners owned their own homes and 4 per cent. were making mortgage repayments.

Residential Care Allowances

25. **Mr. Spearing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what consultations he has initiated consequently on receipt of the Price Waterhouse report on residential care allowances to charitable or other homes for the elderly.

Mr. Scott: The Price Waterhouse report was commissioned to provide background information for consideration as part of this year's uprating. Other interested parties provided comments or information that they wished to be considered.

Amputees

26. **Mr. Harry Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many amputees had their mobility allowance withdrawn or suspended in the last three years for which figures are available.

Mr. Scott: I regret that this information is not available. The Department's records do, however, show that of the 611,000 people currently receiving mobility allowance, 8,000 are shown as having amputation of a limb as the main cause of their inability to walk.

Benefits

Mr. Brazier: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would be the cost in a full year of abolishing the capital rule and deemed income and basing benefit on actual income only for *(a)* housing benefit, *(b)* community charge benefit, *(c)* family credit and *(d)* age premium for retirement pensioners.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The cost in a full year of abolishing capital limits and tariff income for the income-related benefits and basing benefit on actual income from capital is estimated to be:

	1990-91 prices £ million
a. Housing benefit	60
b. Community charge benefit	70
c. Family credit	2
d. Income support	60

It is estimated that there would be no cost if the change was made only to income support for those receiving a pensioner premium.

Source: Modelled using data drawn from the 1985, 1986 and 1987 family expenditure surveys. Estimates of capital holdings are uncertain because they are imputed from reported income from investment and savings. The estimated costs quoted assume particular interest rate levels and patterns of capital asset holdings.

Mr. Brazier: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would be the cost in a full year of abolishing the capital rule and deemed income and basing benefit on 10 per cent. of annual income only for *(a)* housing benefit, *(b)* community charge benefit, *(c)* family credit and *(d)* age premium for retirement pensioners.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The expenditure effect in a full year of abolishing capital limits and tariff income for the income-related benefits and basing benefit assessment on an assumed interest on savings of 10 per cent. is estimated to be:

1990-91 prices

	£ million
(a) Housing benefit	[1]10
(b) Community charge benefit	[2]20
(c) Family credit	[1]2
(d) Income support	[1]5

[1] Million saving.
[2] Million cost.

It is estimated that if the change were applied only to income support for those receiving pensioner premium there would be a saving of £30 million. Savings arise because 10 per cent. income would be assumed on the first £3,000 of savings, whereas at present there is no tariff income at this level, and because a 10 per cent. assumed income is higher than the present tariff income in the lower saving brackets above £3,000.

Source: Modelled using data drawn from the 1985, 1986 and 1987 family expenditure surveys. Estimates of capital holdings are uncertain because they are imputed from reported income from investment and savings.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he has received on the proposed changes in housing benefit subsidies for 1991-92; what were the views of the local authority associations; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I assume that the hon. Member is referring to the reduction from 97 per cent. to 95 per cent. in the rate of direct subsidy for community charge benefit and certain housing benefit cases from April 1991. We have received 24 written inquiries from Members of Parliament, 48 letters from individual local authorities, and a number of representations from the local authority associations which my right hon. Friend the Minister of State met to discuss the proposal on 24 September. The associations were opposed to the proposal and felt that benefit expenditure should be subsidised at 100 per cent. The Government's view is that the change is a modest adjustment in the balance between direct and indirect subsidy, the consequences of which were fully taken into account in the proposed local authority finance settlements for 1991-92.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many residents of registered care or nursing homes would have their entitlement to housing benefit ended as a result of the Housing Benefit (General) Amendment (No. 3) Regulations 1990;

(2) what assessment has been made by his Department of the implications of the Housing Benefit (General) Amendment (No. 3) Regulations 1990 for the residential security of those residents in registered residential care and nursing homes who were previously entitled to housing benefit.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Under the proposals in the draft Housing Benefit (General) Amendment (No. 3) Regulations 1990, all those in a registered residential care or nursing home who were entitled to housing benefit on 29 October will retain entitlement under the current rules, as will all those who had submitted a claim for housing benefit on or before that date which is subsequently determined in their favour. In addition, residents of registered homes who are not entitled to the special rates of income support because they are in full-time work, or living in a home run by a close relative, will retain access to housing benefit for help with accommodation costs.

Information is not available about the numbers likely to be affected by the proposed changes. The special rates of income support will continue to be available to help meet the homes' fees for those in registered residential care or nursing homes with insufficient resources of their own.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations have been received by his Department with regard to the proposal to abolish housing benefit for residents of registered care homes.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: We are currently consulting with the Social Security Advisory Committee and the local authority associations on the proposals contained in the draft Housing Benefit (General) Amendment No. 3 Regulations 1990. That consultation process is not yet completed. We have also received a number of letters on the proposed changes from hon. Members and others.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he last met representatives of local authorities to discuss the adequacy of social security benefits to residents of registered residential care and nursing homes.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State met representatives from the Association of County Councils in April, when income support for people in residential care homes and nursing homes was discussed.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many residents of registered residential care or nursing homes in full-time employment are currently claiming housing benefit.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: This information is not available.

Community Charge Benefit

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people in Wales are currently receiving, under the poll tax benefit scheme *(a)* family premium, *(b)* pensioner premium and *(c)* disability premium.

Sir Ian Gilmour: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many and what proportion of *(a)* pensioners, *(b)* two-parent families with children and *(c)* lone-parent families with children, living in the inner London boroughs, he expects to claim community charge benefit; and how many have already done so.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The information requested is not available.

Grants and Loans

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the cash totals spent in the current financial year to date, and the balances remaining for the rest of the financial year, for each of the DSS offices in Glasgow in respect of *(a)* community care grants, *(b)* budgeting loans and *(c)* crisis loans.

Mr. Scott: The information can be obtained from the Library.

Mobility Allowance

Sir David Price: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of people receiving mobility allowance for each year since 1979.

Mr. Scott: The average number of mobility allowa beneficiaries for the years requested is in the table:

Year	*Thousands*
1979-80	140
1980-81	185
1981-82	210
1982-83	265
1983-84	315
1984-85	390
1985-86	420
1986-87	460
1987-88	515
1988-89	560
1989-90	615

Maintenance

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State Social Security what proportion of fathers who are li to pay maintenance to their wives or former partners their children actually do so.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Information about fathers is available in the precise form requested. However, at M 1989, the latest date for which this information available, 23 per cent. of lone mothers receiving inc support were receiving maintenance payments.

Benefit Deductions

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for So Security how many claimants are currently having poll deductions made from their benefit; and if he will mal statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Just over 9,000 deductions community charge arrears were being made at 31 Au 1990.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 20 November 1990

ENVIRONMENT

National Rivers Authority

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to announce his Department's contribution to the National Rivers Authority budget for next year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment and Countryside on 14 November to my hon. Friend the Member for Boothferry (Mr. Davis), *Official Report*, Vol. 180, column *156*.

Toxic Waste

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate the number and location of toxic waste sites that are known to contain benzine.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: This information is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Housing Action Trusts

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many housing action trusts have been accepted and how many are in being.

Mr. Key: No housing action trusts have so far been established. Discussions are proceeding with the council and tenants in the London borough of Waltham Forest and Hull city council is consulting tenants about the council's proposal for a housing action trust for the North Hull estate.

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the cost of the consultants' fees for the Government's housing action trust programme to the end of October.

Mr. Key: At 31 October 1990 the following amounts had been spent on consultancies related to housing action trust proposals: Tower Hamlets, £182,000; Lambeth, £182,000; Southwark, £1,411,000; Sandwell, £191,000; Leeds, £161,000; Sunderland, £667,000; and Waltham Forest, £129,000.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if, pursuant to his answer to the honourable Member for Taunton (Mr. Nicholson), *Official Report*, 14 November, column 562, he will list for each authority in the west midlands the numbers of adults on the poll tax register and the percentage, at the latest available date, who *(a)* have begun paying the poll tax and *(b)* are now seriously in arrears.

Mr. Key: The available information obtained from returns to the Department is given in the table. No information is available on the numbers seriously in arrears.

Authority	*Number of people who have made a payment in respect of a personal community charge by 30 September 1990*	*Number of people liable who have not made a payment in respect of a personal community charge by 30 September 1990*	*Percentage making some payment*
Coventry	189,403	41,693	82·0
Dudley	208,161	26,281	88·8
Sandwell	189,119	33,374	85·0
Solihull	158,100	16,315	90·6
Walsall	168,842	28,851	85·4

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many local authorities levy the standard charge for the poll tax at *(a)* zero, *(b)* one half, *(c)* one, *(d)* one and a half and *(e)* two times the personal charge for the area.

Mr. Key: Local authorities have the discretion to levy different multiples of the personal charge on different classes of unoccupied property. Information on the highest multiplier set on any class of property in an authority's area has been derived from returns by local authorities and is as follows:

Highest multiplier set	*Number of charging authorities*
0	16
0·5	0
1	33
1·5	5
2	300
[1]—	12

[1]Not known.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will publish tables for each charging authority in England in receipt of safety net grant, classified by political control and the amount to be withdrawn, in *(a)* 1991-92 and *(b)* 1992-93, expressed both in £ million and £ per head;

(2) if he will publish tables for each charging authority in England presently contributing to the safety net, classified by political control and the amount they will gain in grants in 1991-92, expressed both in £ million and £ per head.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 19 November 1990]:* The revenue support grant transition report (England) sets out the adjustments made to the revenue support grant in 1990-91 as a result of the safety net. As announced in October 1989, there will be no contributions in 1991-92 when the safety net is replaced by area protection grant financed by the Exchequer.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has proposed that, in each charging authority, area protection grant in 1991-92 should be no more than £25 per adult less than the combined 1990-91 benefit of the safety net and low rateable value areas grant.

I have today placed in the Library a table showing, in £ million and £ per adult, 1990-91 safety net adjustments plus low rateable value areas grant and 1991-92 proposed levels of area protection grant. The table also indicates the political control of the charging authority as at May 1990. Most areas are served by more than one local authority and the political control of other authorities may not be the same as that of the charging authority.

The table shows among other things that charge payers in Conservative authorities are contributing £354 million to the safety net this year; and that charge payers in Labour authorities will receive £409 million in 1991-92.

Under current proposals a further £25 per adult of 1991-92 area protection grant will be withdrawn in 1992-93—or the whole of the grant where this is less than £25. The amount withdrawn in £ millions will depend on the 1992-93 adult population.

United Nations Environment Fund

Mr. Ian Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the United Kingdom plans to increase its contribution to the United Nations Environment Programme's environment fund in 1991.

Mr. Chris Patten: The Department's spending plans for 1991-92 include provision for a contribution of £4 million to the environment fund of the United Nations Environment Programme, £1 million more than our contribution in 1990. This will be the second successive annual increase in the United Kingdom's contribution to the fund. These increased contributions reflect our commitment to the important work which UNEP is undertaking on global environmental issues, pa in relation to the 1992 United Nations confe environment and development.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Educational Psychologists

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of S Education and Science if he will publish the a specific funds that have not been allocated education authorities for the training of edu psychologists out of the sum which was made

Mr. Alan Howarth: The local education training grants scheme—LEATGS—for 1990-91 support for up to £2·8 million of expenditure on t training of educational psychologists. Local au have requested and been allocated support for spe some £2·5 million on such training.

LEA Administration Costs

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of S Education and Science what is the average administration per pupil in *(a)* the Essex local e authority, *(b)* all local education authorities and local education authorities which comprise the authorities which contains Essex.

Mr. Fallon: The average budgeted cost o administration per pupil, as reported in management of schools annual budget state 1990-91, is £69 in Essex. This is calculated by div figure on the statement by the number of pupils maintained schools in Essex on 18 January 199 same basis, the average cost of central administr pupil in the 36 shire counties for which a sta available is £66. The coverage of the central admi figure in the statements differs between authori not possible to give a comparable national figur authorities without schemes for the local manag schools are not obliged to publish this informati

Nursery Education

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of Education and Science if he will list the scope, e cost of nursery education in each of the bor Greater Manchester.

Mr. Eggar: Information on the cost of this pr not available centrally. The boroughs' provi nursery education in January 1989 was as follo

	Nursery Schools			*Nursery Classes*		
	Number	*[1]Pupils*	*[2]Participation rate per cent.*	*[3]Number*	*[1]Pupils*	*[2]Pa ra*
Bolton	5	485	6·4	44	2,300	
Bury	2	166	3·6	25	1,079	
Manchester	7	536	4·1	138	6,618	
Oldham	—	—	—	46	2,174	
Rochdale	8	922	14·6	17	928	
Salford	18	851	14·2	71	2,289	
Stockport	9	796	10·6	10	404	
Tameside	4	332	5·5	41	2,077	
Trafford	—	—	—	20	1,078	
Wigan	2	176	2·1	30	1,962	

[1] Pupils under 5 at January 1989.
[2] Number of pupils under 5 expressed as a percentage of the estimated 3 and 4 year old population.
[3] Number of primary schools with designated nursery classes.

Information on the extent of participation in nursery education in each local education authority is published annually in a statistical bulletin; the latest of which, No. 7/90, is available in the Library.

Course Fees

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what his policy is towards institutions of further and higher education imposing fees for courses of study previously covered by grants.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The Government have no plans to change the present arrangements whereby standard tuition fees are met from public funds for students qualifying for a mandatory award. However, actual tuition fee levels are properly for individual institutions to set.

National Curriculum

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will accept the recommendations of the National Curriculum Council that art, music and physical recreation should be retained as compulsory subjects in the national curriculum for pupils up to the age of 16 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. Friend is considering the curriculum framework for 14 to 16-year-olds in the light of the National Curriculum Council's advice. He will make his views known as soon as possible.

Agricultural and Food Research Council

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has received the annual report of the Agricultural and Food Research Council for 1989-90; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The annual report of the Agricultural and Food Research Council has been submitted to my right hon. and learned Friend under the requirements of the Science and Technology Act 1965, and a copy is being placed before the House today.

I was especially interested to read in the report about the success of Dr. Michael Berridge in winning the Albert Lasker medical research award for AFRC-sponsored work on molecular signalling; about the establishment of the AFRC centre for genome research at the university of Edinburgh; and about the work on anti-sense genes in fruit being funded at Nottingham university. I was pleased to read that the council has developed a £1·8 million research grants scheme to support younger research workers at an early stage of their career, and to learn of the council's success in attracting a total of £1·4 million from European Community funds for its work.

My right hon. and learned Friend and I congratulate the council on these and other achievements. We look forward to reading about further progress, under the council's new chairman, in next year's report.

Polytechnics

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on student numbers in polytechnics in 1990-91.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Provisional figures for the 1990-91 academic year published today by the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council and the Committee of Directors of Polytechnics show a 10·6 per cent. increase in the numbers of full-time and sandwich students in polytechnics compared with last year, and a 3·6 per cent. increase in the number of part-time students.

I very much welcome this dramatic increase in the numbers of young people in higher education in polytechnics. I look forward to this success being repeated in the next few years. The Government's policy is aimed at ensuring that an even higher proportion of our young people should receive good-quality higher and further education.

Polytechnics and colleges have clearly been encouraged in their recruitment decisions by the first stage of shift in the balance of public funding of higher education to tuition fees introduced by the Government for 1990-91. For every additional student enrolled beyond the plans announced last year, institutions will receive £1,675 compared with only £607 in 1989-90. In 1991-92, when differentiated fees are introduced, the average tuition fee in the sector will be nearly £2,200.

TRANSPORT

Roads (Stockport)

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the current cost of the road programme for which he is responsible within the Metropolitan borough of Stockport.

Mr. Chope: The figure is £112 million. This excludes that part of the proposed Manchester airport eastern link road within the borough for which costs are not yet available.

Bus Undertakings

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the bus transport undertakings taken over by Stagecoach Ltd. under the deregulation provisions; if he will list all bus services they have subsequently terminated; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: There is no requirement on the bus industry to notify the Department of Transport of takeovers. The latest published information on undertakings held by Stagecoach Ltd. is contained in the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report into the acquisition of Portsmouth Citybus Ltd. The termination or commencement of bus services is primarily a matter for the industry and the information requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what studies have been undertaken on mergers and transfers of bus undertakings since the deregulation provisions took effect; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Transport and Road Research Laboratory is currently undertaking a study into the structure of the bus industry. This will include a general review of mergers and transfers of bus undertakings. The

Monopolies and Mergers Commission has reported to the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry on a number of specific mergers.

Dock Labour Scheme

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the companies formerly operating within the national dock labour scheme that declared themselves insolvent after the abolition of the scheme; how many companies are now trading under the same names as any of these companies; and how many companies now trading have the same directors.

Mr. McLoughlin: The regulations made under the Dock Work Act 1989 ensure that no formerly registered dock worker loses out because his employer is unable to meet his 50 per cent. share of the compensation payment. The Department has paid the full amount to the employees, through the companies' liquidators, in 14 cases which are listed in the table. I am unable to answer the remainder of this question. However, the Department relied on the liquidator to confirm that the companies were no longer trading; and in certain cases it asked the liquidator to undertake inquiries to establish that no transfer of undertaking had taken place.

Aberdeen Stevedores Ltd.
Anglosped Ltd. (Chatham)
Dundee Stevedores Ltd.
Fish Landing Temporary Employers (Aberdeen) Ltd.
Great Yarmouth Port Labour Co. Ltd.
Grimsby Port Services Ltd.
John Sutcliffe Consolidated Stevedores Ltd. (Grimsby)
Lindsey Dock Services Ltd. (Grimsby)
Liverpool Grain Storage and Transit Co.
Manisty Wharf Ltd. (Ellesmere Port)
Mersey Container Terminals Ltd.
Seahorn Marine Enterprises Ltd. (Liverpool)
West Langton Stevedores Ltd. (Liverpool)
Wisbech Stevedores Ltd.

Severn Bridge

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received from solicitors acting for the bereaved concerning the design, installation and proper use of the gantry which plunged into the River Severn on 5 September involving two fatalities; what reply he has sent; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer Monday 19 November 1990]:* I am not willing to disclose the contents of correspondence between the solicitors acting for the bereaved families and the Department's solicitors.

ABS Brakes

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to make it mandatory for motor manufacturers to fit ABS brakes as standard equipment on all new vehicles.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer Monday 19 November 1990]:* Under regulations made in September anti-lock brakes will be mandatory on all vehicles in the following categories manufactured on or after 1 October 1990:

Motor Vehicles over 16 tonnes authorised to tow trailers over 10 tonnes;
Trailers over 10 tonnes; and
Inter-urban coaches.

Compulsory fitment of anti-lock brakes t categories of vehicle depends on Community agr But we are encouraging the wider use of anti-lock particularly on motorcycles.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Fire Service College

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State Home Department what level of funding will be p for the Fire Service college in the next year; and wh are being taken where local councils fail to su funds necessary for their firefighters to attend Service college.

Mr. John Patten: The planned level of fundin Fire Service college in respect of fire officers in and Wales for 1991-92 is £9·2 million, made up fr £6 million by a block contribution from the support grant and the balance from direct charge brigades. The exercise of the fire authorities' duty t that their fire brigade staff are effectively trai continue to be monitored closely by Her M inspectorate of fire services.

Wandsworth Prison

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of Stat Home Department if he will state the reason removal of Dr. Adam Lawrence from his post as consultant to Her Majesty's prison, Wandsworth

Mrs. Rumbold: Dr. Lawrence, a consultant p specialising in genito-urinary medicine, was in April this year to visit Wandsworth prison once a advise on patient care within his specialty. This wa arrangment instituted by the then senior medica Dr. Lawrence recently took part in a television pro in which he disclosed clinical details relating to Wandsworth prisoner with whose treatment he had been concerned, and criticised clinical decisi medical colleage. The senior medical officer co that these actions were not conducive to har working relations within the health care te informed Dr. Lawrence that he had decided to ma arrangements for the provision of specialist adv director of prison medical services fully supp action taken.

Security Services Tribunal

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for t Department if he has any plans to seek to an Security Service Act 1989 to allow the Security Tribunal to reveal to the individuals concer information that was held on them prior to 18 D 1989.

Mr. Waddington: No.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for t Department how many applications for a information the Security Services Tribunal has since December 1989; in how many cases it has the information requested; in how many case refused to provide the information; and what reasons given.

Mr. Waddington: The Security Service Tribunal is an independent body established by the Security Service Act 1989; I am not privy to its deliberations or to the number and nature of applications made to it. The tribunal is required to investigate complaints from any person who is aggrieved by anything which he believes that the Security Service has done in relation to him or to any property of his, if and so far as the complaint relates to anything done after the commencement of the Act, and to make a determination in accordance with schedule 1 to the Act. While paragraph 4(1) of schedule 2 to the Act enables the tribunal to gain access to such documents or information as it may require for the purpose of enabling it to carry out its functions under the Act, it is not empowered to seek on behalf of a complainant or any other person access to such documents or information. Indeed, paragraph 4(2) of schedule 2 to the Act requires the tribunal not to give any reasons for a determination notified by it, except in reports under paragraph 5(1)(b) of schedule 1.

Animal Experiments

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will ban those animal procedures involving LD50 and Draize tests.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary is not one of the Ministers reponsible for the national and international regulations under which specific safety testing protocols are required; nor is he a sponsoring Minister for biomedical research. His responsibility is for controlling the conduct of scientific procedures on living animals. We have no plans to refuse licences where my right hon. and learned Friend is satisfied that the work is justified under section 5 of the Animal (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986. The Government continue to play an active role in developing acceptable alternative methods of testing.

Mr. Julius Alexander/Mr. Shamusideen Oladehinde

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether Her Majesty's Government are continuing with their appeal in the cases of Mr. Julius Alexander of Hackney and Mr. Shamusideen Oladehinde; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: In a judgment on 18 October, the House of Lords dismissed the appeals of Mr. Alexander and Mr. Oladehinde. My right hon. and learned Friend will be reviewing their cases in order to decide whether to enforce deportation.

Psychiatric Bail Hostels

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has as to the likely cost of setting up a system of psychiatric bail hostels; and what estimate has been made of the present cost of keeping people who would benefit from such provision in prison.

Mr. John Patten: On the basis of discussions with probation areas and voluntary organisations, we calculate that the unit cost of any approved bail hostel places for mentally disordered defendants would approach twice that of conventional places at approved bail hostels which in 1989-90 stood at £10,000 per annum. It is not possible to separate out the cost of keeping a mentally disordered defendant in a local prison or remand centre without disproportionate cost, but the average cost per inmate in 1989-90 was about £16,000 per annum.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether any decisions have been made with regard to setting up a system of psychiatric bail hostels; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: We are considering what part bail hostels can play in a strategy for dealing with people who are mentally disordered, and shall announce our conclusion as soon as possible.

Although no final decisions have yet been taken, the Government are firmly of the view that mentally disordered offenders should be diverted from the criminal justice system wherever possible or receive appropriate placements and prompt psychiatric treatment where prosecution is necessary in the public interest. A Home Office circular providing details of the wide range of measures available for achieving this was issued to the courts and others on 3 September 1990. I have sent a copy to the hon. Gentleman.

Sentences

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people serving life sentences, discretionary or mandatory, have tariffs of more than 20 years.

Mrs. Rumbold: There are some 150 life sentence prisoners whose cases will be, or have been, reviewed by the Parole Board for the first time after 17 years in custody, because the period considered necessary to mark the seriousness of their offences is more than 20 years.

Overseas Electors

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has as to the number of overseas electors whose names were added to local electoral roles in each constituency; how much was spent promoting overseas the new rules and regulations; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: Information on the number of overseas electors who will be included in the 1991-92 electoral register will not become available until the publication of the draft register on 28 November. Approximately £425,000 has been or will be spent by the Home Office and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in publicising overseas the new provisions on voting by British citizens living abroad.

Magistrates Courts

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish tables showing the cost of expenditure in magistrates courts for each of the last 10 years; and if he will set down in tabular form the percentage of these costs for each year met from local authority funds.

Mr. John Patten: Local authority expenditure on magistrates' courts in England and Wales and the amount of central Government grant paid in support of this expenditure since 1980-81 is set out in the table. Grant is paid at a rate of 80 per cent. of net current expenditure.

Before the present financial year, capital expenditure was supported by grant at 80 per cent. payable only in respect of revenue contributions and loan charges. Since April 1990 capital grant is paid at 80 per cent. on approved capital expenditure and on loans incurred before that date. Grant is not necessarily paid in the same year as that in which the expenditure is incurred.

Expenditure on magistrates' courts

	(1) Total expenditure (current and capital)[1] *(£ million)*	*(2) Central government grants in support of (1)* *(£ million)*	*Local government expenditure as a proportion of total (1) minus (2) as a percentage of (1)*
1980-81	102	85	17
1981-82	114	101	11
1982-83	124	105	15
1983-84	139	114	18
1984-85	152	121	20
1985-86	161	128	20
1986-87	178	134	25
1987-88	213	153	28
1988-89	235	170	28
1989-90	[2]273	187	32
1990-91	307	[3]280	9

[1] Excluding loan charges.
[2] Provisional figure.
[3] Estimate.

Probation Service

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects the efficiency scrutiny of in-service training for the probation service to begin.

Mr. John Patten: The efficiency scrutiny of in-service probation training will begin on 26 November. It will have the following terms of reference:

"To examine the current arrangements for providing in-service probation training, and to advise and make recommendations on:

(a) what in-service training, including management training, should be offered to probation officers up to and including SPO grade;

(b) who should provide it and how;

(c) what it will cost and how it should be financed;

(d) how it should link with pre-qualifying training and management training for chief officers grades;

(e) what steps should be taken to monitor quality, relevance, effectiveness and consistency throughout the service, to measure performance and to ensure value for money; and

(f) what the line of accountability should be, and what structured systems and procedures are needed."

The scrutiny will be conducted by a small team of officials led by Dr. Savas Hadjipavlou of the Home Office. He will be closely assisted by Mr. Steven Murphy on secondment from the inner London probation service. We expect to receive the report during April 1991.

The scrutiny team will be consulting widely. Interested parties may wish to send their observations in writing to the In-Service Probation Training Scrutiny Team, Room 116/117, Home Office, Whittington house, 19-30 Alfred place, London WC1E 7LG.

Murderers (Release)

Mr. Tebbit: To ask the Secretary of State fo Department if he will update his reply to the ho for Beverley (Mr. Cran) of 13 July 1989, *Offi* column 638 concerning the numbers of peopl died at the hands of previously convicted kill

Mr. Waddington *[holding answer 19 Noven* Information on the number of suspects c homicide who had previous homicide con published annually in "Criminal Statistics, E Wales"—tables 4.9 and 4.10 of the latest issu Cm. 1322—copies of which are in the Library

During the period 1963 to 1989, a total of 5 England and Wales are killed by persons convicted of homicide.

Electoral Registration

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of S Home Department (1) what rights of appeal p whose names are removed from an electo whether such persons are notified by electoral officers of an intention to remove a name and explanation; and what information electoral officers are required to supply in writing;

(2) if he will withdraw Home Office circul issued to electoral registration officers, registration of those persons whose names d on poll tax registers; and if he will make a st

(3) what is Government policy with res removal of names from electoral registers o have failed to register for poll tax purposes; a make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold *[holding answer 19 Nover* Circular RPA 347, issued by the Home C August 1990 as part of its guidance to electoral officers—EROs—in England and Wales, mad dations about the use of information in the charges register in the compilation of the elect This included a recommendation that a pe should not be carried forward from one elec to the next if that person does not respond to canvass and his or her name does not ap community charges register. It also recom where such a name does appear in the commu register it should not be carried forward for m year without further inquiries to establish eli

Under section 29 of the Local Government 1988, EROs in England and Wales may, for th exercising their functions, inspect the comm register of any charging authority. The pu Home Office guidance issued on 10 August w and encourage EROs to make the fullest and m use of this right of access, to assist in the prep accurate electoral register.

There is no procedure whereby names can from the published register. A person whose carried forward from one register to the nex or she has failed to respond to the canvass a appears to be eligible, has ample opportuni claim for inclusion in the register.

Asylum Seekers

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the number of people seeking asylum in the United Kingdom in each quarter of 1988, 1989 and 1990, showing the numbers by country of embarkation.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 14 November 199*
Information by nationality of applicant is given in table.

Applications received for asylum in the United Kingdom, by nationality, 1988-90

	1988				1989[1]				1990[1]	
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2
Europe										
Czechoslovakia	2	8	10	6	5	15	35	5	•	—
Hungary	15	5	7	9	10	•	5	5	•	•
Poland	25	19	26	18	10	10	15	15	5	5
Romania	4	2	13	3	5	5	•	5	5	20
Turkey	217	155	126	203	570	3,645	140	125	135	210
Yugoslavia	3	1	2	2	•	•	15	•	•	5
Others	—	9	8	5	10	15	25	20	30	35
Total	266	199	192	246	610	3,695	230	175	180	280
Americas										
Chile	7	6	2	3	5	5	5	5	•	—
Colombia	21	15	15	9	20	15	30	25	20	55
Others	1	3	4	4	5	5	5	5	15	10
Total	29	24	21	16	30	30	40	30	35	60
Africa										
Angola	11	11	15	23	40	35	95	90	135	200
Ethiopia	53	62	86	69	65	70	230	240	190	380
Ghana	51	43	45	48	45	75	90	135	220	170
Libya	25	18	12	4	5	•	5	5	•	5
Seychelles	32	14	15	16	15	5	10	15	10	5
Somalia[2]	70	73	125	154	420	345	1,005	930	475	510
South Africa	13	3	11	12	15	20	5	5	10	5
Sudan	3	11	18	16	25	25	45	60	60	40
Uganda	92	163	152	141	235	385	500	545	460	55
Zaire	37	33	38	75	100	105	200	315	450	440
Others	21	27	27	42	55	35	35	30	50	60
Total	409	458	544	600	1,010	1,100	2,220	2,365	2,070	2,360
Middle East										
Iran	181	177	119	110	130	115	125	125	110	85
Iraq	66	48	113	75	105	60	120	105	160	195
Lebanon	57	43	32	48	25	20	50	95	100	55
Syria	—	2	8	—	5	5	5	•	•	5
Others	5	9	8	15	10	5	5	20	15	10
Total	309	279	280	248	270	205	310	345	380	350
Remainder of Asia										
Afghanistan[3]	9	4	14	14	40	25	25	25	25	55
Bangladesh	—	7	6	2	5	5	•	•	5	15
India	20	61	87	179	140	150	180	255	340	320
Pakistan	125	85	129	57	40	55	65	135	190	155
Sri Lanka	167	101	105	134	190	260	550	1,055	785	705
Others	3	2	9	15	10	30	50	40	40	20
Total	304	260	350	401	430	520	875	1,510	1,385	1,270
Other and unknown nationalities	20	21	48	25	30	35	65	85	75	80
Grand Total	1,357	1,241	1,435	1,536	2,385	5,585	3,740	4,515	4,130	4,410

[1] Provisional figures: those for 1990 may understate because of delays in recording.
Figures rounded to the nearest 5, with "•" = less than 3.

[2] In addition, since mid 1990 certain applications by nationals of Somalia to the British High Commission in Dhaka are being processe locally: information on these cases is not yet available centrally.

[3] In addition, about 1,700 applications in 1988, 35 in 1989 and 30 during January to April 1990, by nationals of Afghanistan, made to t British High Commission in New Delhi, are being processed locally. Corresponding information since May 1990 is not yet available centrall

Small Shops

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he last met representatives of OPEN to discuss the effects of the Shops Act 1950 on the trading position of small shops.

Mrs. Rumbold: The last meeting between Ministers and representatives of OPEN was held on 7 June 1989. Representatives of OPEN have met Home Office officials on several occasions since then to talk about ways of reforming the present law.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Bangladesh

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has on the impact of the Gulf crisis upon Bangladesh's economy and development plans; and what assistance, in addition to existing overseas aid programmes, he proposes.

Mrs. Chalker: Iraq's invasion of Kuwait has affected the economies of many countries. The adverse balance of payments impact on the Bangladesh economy has been estimated at nearly $500 million in 1990-91 by the International Monetary Fund. This includes the loss of workers' remittances, a higher oil import bill and weaker export demand. Prompt domestic action by the Bangladesh Government has reduced to an estimated $260 million the additional external finance needed to maintain imports and real growth at their originally planned levels.

In addition to a substantial bilateral aid programme of over £50 million a year to Bangladesh, Her Majesty's Government have responded quickly with a contribution to the costs of repatriating refugees from the Gulf of whom many are from Bangladesh. This contribution, including Britain's share of European Community assistance, now amounts to £11 million.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has of the number of Bangladeshis still stranded as a consequence of the Gulf crisis, the cost of it in total to the Bangladesh Government; and whether he will now take further steps, including allocating Hercules aircraft and directly chartering United Kingdom civil aircraft, to help the stranded Bangladeshis return.

Mrs. Chalker: I understand that about 6,000 Bangladeshis remain in Kuwait and Iraq. These either cannot or do not wish to leave. The United Nations reports that by the end of September some 50,300 Bangladeshis had left; more than 14,000 were repatriated by the Government of Bangladesh itself, and the remainder by the international operation to which Britain contributed.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations Her Majesty's Government will be making to the World bank meeting this month reviewing, mid-term, aid to Bangladesh.

Mrs. Chalker: The World bank meeting in Dhaka on 6 and 7 November examined the progress made by the Government of Bangladesh on the economic management action plan agreed at the annual aid group meeting last April.

The British delegation joined other World bank in commending the Bangladesh on their firm short-term efforts and their response to the proble Gulf crisis, but urging further action on structural issues. As well as general econ the United Kingdom referred to the im government, including responsiveness to the population, and accountability.

A further review of progress on the place at the next aid group meeting in

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of and Commonwealth Affairs what propo Government will present to the B Kingdom bilateral meeting scheduled f

Mrs. Chalker: The next meeting in ou of bilateral aid talks is now scheduled to in January 1991. These talks enable bo economic and aid management in the pr year; and to consider the likely shape future British assistance, taking due Bangladesh Government's own priorit resources available to Her Majesty's development activities in Bangladesh.

ATTORNEY-GENER

Appeals

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Attorn information he has on the number of in date as is convenient, in which an conviction has not been heard after a l three years.

The Attorney-General: On 12 Nov were six cases in the Criminal Appeal Of appeal against conviction was sought or conviction was pending which had bee foot for over three years.

Fraud Investigation

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Attorney-G been the results of the investigations o squad and the Metropolitan police department into allegations of fraud pri and subsequent to the merger of International Signal and Control Grou make a statement.

The Attorney-General: Inquiries int being carried on by the Serious Fra Metropolitan police in conjunction authorities in the United States of inquiries have not yet been completed.

Shops Act 1950

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Attor consideration has been given in respect of the Shops Act 1950 to the judgm Hoffmann in the High Court on 18 Ju

The Attorney-General: Enforcement 1950 is the duty of local authorities, a

what consideration they have given to Mr. Justice Hoffmann's decision. Mr. Justice Hoffmann confirmed that it continues to be an offence for shops in England and Wales to be open for the serving of customers on Sunday other than in accordance with the provisions of the Act. It follows that local authorities continue to be subject to the duty of enforcement conferred on them by section 71 of the Act.

Local Authorities

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Attorney-General when was the last time he issued guidance on any subject to local authorities.

The Attorney-General: Guidance to local authorities is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

WALES

Welsh Medium Schools

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will take steps to review the policies being pursued by local education authorities in Wales to ensure that children who wish to have their primary or secondary education in Wales at a Welsh medium school are able to do so in conditions and circumstances that are in no way inferior to those available for English medium schools in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: We expect local education authorities to pursue policies which enable them to discharge their statutory responsibilities for the education of all children at maintained schools irrespective of the medium of education.

In the exercise of my responsibilities I am concerned to ensure parity between English medium and Welsh medium provision so far as practicable. For example, the national curriculum provides for the assessment of pupils at all key stages through the medium of either English or Welsh. Welsh medium assessment materials will be of comparable standard to those in English. Moreover central Government continue to give substantial financial support for the development of Welsh medium teaching materials generally.

It is for local education authorities to determine their own priorities for allocating capital resources for the provision of educational buildings and their capital maintenance, bearing in mind the needs of both the English and Welsh medium sectors.

Local education authorities are also responsible for ensuring that schools have adequate funds to meet the cost of essential equipment. The introduction of local management of schools will ensure a fair distribution of resources and will provide schools with the flexibility to decide their own education priorities.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his latest estimate of the number of persons in Wales liable to poll tax who have not yet made any payment.

Mr. Grist: The information requested is not available centrally.

Cardiganshire

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of St Wales how many people reside in Cardiganshire; were the corresponding figures for 1960 and 1970; he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Estimates of the population area of Ceredigion, known prior to 1974 as Cardiga are given in the following table. As the definition population was changed following the 1981 censu estimates for the years 1971 to 1981 were recalculate 1971 data are given on both bases for comparison.

Mid year	*Home population*	*Usuall residen population*[1]
1960	53,300	n/a
1970	53,200	n/a
1971	54,000	55,70
1989	n/a	69,00

[1] This 1981 Census based estimate differs from the population definition in that all usual residents, including st armed forces, are included whatever their nationality.
Source: OPCS.

Live Horses (Export)

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of Sta Wales if he will make a statement on the progr negotiations with the European Community on w standards for live horses for export from Wales after

Sir Wyn Roberts: Only one Community meetin been held to discuss the Commission's proposa protection of animals during transport. We wi pressing to retain controls on the export of horse ponies.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of Stat Wales if he will publish a table showing the unemploy rate by age for each Welsh district, travel-to-work are parliamentary constituency.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Unemployment rates are calculated for individual districts or parliame constituencies. The unemployment rates for travel-to-work areas are available from the NO database, which can be accessed on-line by Hou Commons Library staff. Separate rates for particula groups are not available.

Mr. Rod Richards

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for W further to his reply of 13 November, *Official Re* column *106*, if he will make a further statement o range of subjects on which Mr. Rod Richards wi expected to advise him.

Sir Wyn Roberts: My right hon. Friend has nothi add to the answer he gave the hon. Gentleman o November.

DEFENCE

Trident

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the earliest possible contractual dates for completion for the Trident-related contracts with GEC, Plessey, Rolls-Royce, Tarmac and Vickers Shipbuilding and Engineering Ltd.

Mr. Alan Clark: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave her on 26 July 1990 at column *541*, and to my reply dated 21 September 1990 to her letter of 30 August 1990.

Nuclear Weapons Testing

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the nuclear weapons testing programme.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The United Kingdom carried out an underground nuclear test at the United States Department of Energy's Nevada test site on Wednesday 14 November. Such tests are carried out under the 1958 United States-United Kingdom agreement for mutual co-operation for defence purposes and are necessary to maintain the effectiveness of the nuclear deterrent.

Damage to Property

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy on compensating, or making ex gratia payments to, his Department's employees whose personal property is damaged on his Department's premises by people unlawfully present on his Department's premises.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: While my Department pays compensation where it is legally liable to do so, it cannot generally be held responsible for the acts of persons unlawfully present on the Department's property. However, the Department, exceptionally, considers small value claims from its employees for damage to personal property sustained on the Department's premises on an ex-gratia basis.

Officers' Married Quarters

Sir John Hunt: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much is currently being spent on the renting of residential accommodation for RAF officers in the Greater London area as a consequence of the shortfall in the availability of officers' married quarters in the area.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The RAF no longer rents residential accommodation in lieu of married quarters. An excess rent allowance is paid to compensate married service personnel for higher costs incurred in renting private accommodation, but the information on that paid for RAF officers in the Greater London area is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Sir John Hunt: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will indicate the present position with regard to the availability of RAF officers' married quarters in the Greater London area; and what effect the planned disposal of officers' married quarters at RAF Biggin Hill is expected to have on the supply of such accommodation.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The number of RAF officers' married quarters in the Greater London area is adequate for our needs. In view of the anticipated reduction in the requirement for officers' married quarters in the Greater London area in the medium to long term, the planned disposal of the RAF officers' married quarters at RAF Biggin Hill is not expected to affect the situation adversely.

RAF Biggin Hill

Sir John Hunt: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent reductions have taken place in the establishment at RAF Biggin Hill; and what effect such reduction in posts there will have on the anticipated savings from the pending closure of RAF Biggin Hill.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Following a review of RAF catering manpower scales, on which establishments are based, a small number of posts has recently been disestablished at RAF Biggin Hill. The disestablishment of these posts ahead of relocation of the RAF officer and aircrew selection centre does not significantly affect the anticipated savings attributable to the closure of RAF Biggin Hill.

Welsh Army Headquarters

Mr. Livsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make it his policy to continue to maintain a separate Welsh headquarters base for the Army at Brecon, commanded by a General as at present, and not to merge Welsh headquarters with those in other areas.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I have already announced that the district structure of the United Kingdom land forces has been the subject of a review by the commander in chief. Consideration of the recommendations of that review is now at an advanced stage and I expect to be able to make an announcement on the way ahead in the near future.

Military Installations

Mr. Livsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether it remains the policy of his Department to comply with planning procedures for new military installations.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Although developments by the Crown do not require planning permission, it remains the policy of the Ministry of Defence to follow the provisions laid down in the appropriate DOE, Welsh Office and Scottish Office circulars.

Technology Exports

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all proposed orders and contracts known to Her Majesty's Government which have been thwarted due to the NATO ban on exporting high technology to communist countries; what was the purpose and value in each case; and whether it is proposed to lift the ban.

Mr. Sainsbury: I have been asked to reply.

No. It has been the practice of successive Governments not to comment on individual licensing matters. While there has been a significant relaxation of export controls maintained for strategic reasons in the light of recent developments, and work is continuing with our COCOM partners, certain controls on exports of sensitive technology and equipment continue to be necessary.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Western Sahara

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met representatives of Polisario to discuss the problems of Western Sahara; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has not met any Polisario representative, but there have been occasional informal meetings between Foreign and Commonwealth Office officials and representatives of Polisario.

Kuwait

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the latest position of Her Majesty's Government's policy over the continuing occupation of Kuwait.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We want to see the United Nations Security Council resolutions fully implemented. We seek complete and unconditional Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait, the restoration of its legitimate Government and the release of all foreign nationals held in Iraq and Kuwait. As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister told the House on 7 November, either Saddam Hussein should voluntarily leave Kuwait or he will be forced to withdraw.

Iraq

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has on the effect that economic sanctions against Iraq are having on that country's economy; what measures need to be taken to make them more effective; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs told the House on 8 November, the international embargo continues to be broadly effective. Iraq's access to foreign exchange has been drastically reduced. Iraq's manufacturing and industrial capabilities have been particularly affected. Food rationing has been introduced. However, on the evidence available, sanctions alone are unlikely to be decisive in reversing Iraqi policy in the near future.

Mr. Ashton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the hon. Member for Bassetlaw may expect a reply to his letter of 15 October concerning the situation of Mr. Mel Hewson of The Orchard, Station road, Walkeringham, Nottinghamshire, and Mr. Roland Hornsby of High street, North Leverton, Nottinghamshire, who are detained in Al Qaim in Iraq.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I have replied today to the hon. Member's letter of 18 October. We have great sympathy for the plight of Mr. Hewson and Mr. Hornsby.

Cayman Islands

Mr. Conway: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has for reviewing the constitution of the Cayman Islands; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has agreed to a request from the legislative assembly in the Cayman Islands for a constitutional review. He has appointed Sir Frederick Smith KA QC, chief justice in the Turks and Caicos Islands, and Mr. Walter Wallace CVO CBE DSC, constitutional adviser on the dependent territories to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, as commissioners. The commission will sit for eight weeks, beginning in January 1991.

ENERGY

Energy Conservation

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what steps he is taking to accelerate energy conservation programmes for domestic housing.

Mr. Baldry: My Energy Efficiency Office is taking a number of initiatives further to promote energy efficiency in housing. These include the introduction from 1 January 1991 of the home energy efficiency scheme, which provides a new system of grants for insulation and advice on energy for low-income households; a winter advertising campaign promoting a new set of informational material targeted on home movers and those improving their homes; and an information campaign which aims to draw landlords' attention to the opportunities and benefits of improving the energy efficiency of their residential property. In addition, the EEO will be working with commercial labelling systems, such as MVM Starpoint and the national home energy rating scheme, in seeking to promote the benefits of home energy labels.

The EEO is also supporting work to improve the energy efficiency of housing under its best practice programme. Independently monitored case studies and guidance literature are available to building professionals and those responsible for the management of our housing stock. This information is backed up by a comprehensive programme of seminars and workshops, some involving other organisations active in the housing sector. In addition, funds are available to contribute towards relevant research work.

Nuclear Safety

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he expects the prototype computerised safety system for Sizewell B to receive clearance from the nuclear installations inspectorate; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: A prototype of the computer-based element of the proposed protection system for Sizewell B is currently being tested, but no part of the prototype hardware will be used on the reactor. The Health and Safety Executive's nuclear installations inspectorate—NII—will continue to assess the protection system throughout the construction of the plant. The NII will not permit fuel loading, currently programmed for December 1993, until it has approved Nuclear Electric's safety case for the complete protection system.

Civil Defence

Mr. Bill Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many civil servants are currently employed *(a)* full time and *(b)* part time by his Department on civil

defence; what the total costs of employing staff on civil defence duties were in 1989-90; what the total costs of employing staff on civil defence duties are expected to be in 1990-91; and whether he has any plans for these staff to be transferred to work on other duties.

Mr. Wakeham: The information requested is as follows:

Number of staff currently employed full-time on civil defence	*Number of staff currently employed part-time on civil defence*	*Total costs 1989-90*	*Estimated-total cost 1990-91*
		£'000	*£'000*
4	10	270	260

Future levels of staffing and expenditure on civil defence will depend on the outcome of the review announced by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department on 16 October, *Official Report*, column 773.

Gas Prices

Mr. McWilliam: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what was the percentage increase in price in each of the last 10 years from November 1980 for gas consumers using 25,500 therms per annum.

Mr. Wakeham: The increase over the year to November 1990 was 8·8 per cent. Prices at this specific level of consumption are not available to the Department prior to 1989. Should the hon. Member write to British Gas the company might be able to provide earlier data.

Coal Prices

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will place in the Library *(a)* a copy of the favourable position notice issued in July by the competition directorate of the European Commission in relation to the exemption of the three-year contracts between British Coal, National Power and PowerGen, *(b)* a copy of the correction notice issued to that notice in August in relation to the outstanding complaints as regards discriminatory coal pricing and *(c)* any further correspondence between the Commission and the Department of Energy on this issue.

Mr. Baldry: The notices referred to are contained in the *Official Journal* of the European Communities dated 31 July 1990—No. C 191—and 13 September 1990—No. C 228—copies of which are already held in the Library of the House.

It has been the policy of successive Governments to treat correspondence with the Commission as confidential.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make it his policy to place in the Library a copy of the letter of comfort from the competition directorate of the European Commission, relating to contracts between British Coal, National Power and PowerGen.

Mr. Baldry: My reply of 19 November referred to the letter from the Commission's directorate-general for competition to British Coal. Any release of that letter is a matter for them.

Electricity Privatisation

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what supporting evidence, in the form of artisitic works, was adduced by MCA Merchandising of Universal Studios to substantiate its claim for *(a)* licence fees and *(b)* redress for alleged breach of copyright re the Frank N. Stein advertising campaign for the flotation of the electricity distribution companies and his similarity to Herman Munster of the Munsters.

Mr. Baldry: Visual evidence and supporting explanations were supplied by MCA Merchandising, in support of its claim for licence fees. The claim for alleged breach of copyright is a matter between the advertising agency, WCRS, and MCA Merchandising.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what policy considerations in relation to intellectual property rights affected the decision to authorise payments *(a)* in purchase of a licence and *(b)* as settlement for alleged breach of copyright to the MCA Merchandising subsidiary of Universal Studios in respect of Herman Munster's similarity to Frank N. Stein.

Mr. Baldry: The payment of a licence fee was a commercial decision based on legal advice. No policy considerations in relation to intellectual property rights applied in this respect. The settlement for alleged breach of copyright was a matter for WCRS and MCA Merchandising.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Food Products, Devon

Mr. Speller: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his answer of 12 November, *Official Report*, column 68, if he will list the sales of speciality food or drink products from Devon that Food From Britain has supported during 1989 and 1990.

Mr. Curry: Since March 1987 Food From Britain has provided Devon Fare, a speciality food group in Devon, with financial assistance under the speciality food groups scheme amounting to more than £21,000 and with professional and technical advice. The group has supported its members in a variety of ways, and thus sales of many of their products have benefited from Food From Britain's help. However, neither Food From Britain nor this Department holds lists of these sales.

Live Animals (Export)

Sir Charles Irving: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether lorry drivers have sole responsibility for the implementation of safeguards and directives in the transport of live animals to foreign countries; and who receives and acts upon the safeguards and directives once they are handed over.

Mr. Maclean: Community directives on the protection of animals during international transport are implemented by each member state under its national law. United Kingdom welfare legislation places a duty of care on all persons involved in the carriage of animals. Companies as well as individuals have been successfully prosecuted for causing or permitting injury or unnecessary suffering to animals during transport.

Wine and Beef Exports

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the total amount of wine and beef which was exported from the European Community in the most recent annual period for which figures are available; what subsidy was available for such sales expressed in pence per litre or pence per pound, respectively; and what was the range of sale prices after export subsidies and other grants.

Mr. Curry: The total amount of wine and beef exported from the European Community for the most recent annual period for which figures are avaailble were as follows:

Beef (July 1989-June 1990) 763,105 tonnes (product weight)

Wine (May 1989-April 1990) 11,095,709 hectolitres

Official statistics on the range of sale prices after the payment of export refunds are not available.

Rates of export refund for beef vary according to the category of animal, type of meat and destination; those applicable at the end of the period for the export figures provided were published in the *Official Journal* of the European Communities—Reference L129/0 of 19 May 1990 page 21. The export refunds are set in ecu per unit weight or unit volume. One ecu/tonne converted at the United Kingdom agricultural conversion rate is equal to 0·03614 pence/pound.

Rates of export refund for wine during the period for the export figures provided were published in the *Official Journal* of the European Communities—Reference No. L73 of 17 March 1989 page 20. The rate of conversion applicable was:

up to 31 August 1989 one ecu/hectolitre = £0·675071/litre
up to 10 January 1990 one ecu/hectolitre = £0·701383/litre
from 11 January 1990 one ecu/hectolitre = £0·704335/litre

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Steel Industry

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is his Department's policy on the retention of Glasgow as a British Steel price-basing point.

Mr. Leigh: Price-basing points are a matter for the European Commission under article 60 of the treaty of Paris. So far as I am aware, neither the Commission nor British Steel has suggested that the Glasgow point should be removed.

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will set out in detail the powers within British Steel which he may exercise as the holder of the golden share.

Mr. Leigh: The rights attaching to the special rights redeemable preference share in British Steel plc are set out in article 5 of the company's articles of association. The special share is held by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and allows him, or his duly authorised representative, to attend and to speak, but not to vote, at any general meeting or at any meeting of any class of shareholders of the company. The special share also provides that written consent of my right hon. Friend is required: for changes to article 46 of the company's articles of association which currently prohibits any person, other than as specifically permitted, from retaining an interest, either alone or as part of a voting concert party, in 15 per cent. or more of the company's share capital; for the creation or issue in certain circumstances of shares with voting rights attached; for changes to article 5 of the articles of association, or to the definition of "special share" and "special shareholder" in article 2; and for the voluntary winding up of the company.

Consumer Goods

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assessment he has made of the reasons why the output of consumer goods has remained static since mid-1988.

Mr. Leigh: The performance of the consumer goods sector as a whole is clearly influenced by developments in the economy generally. But the performance of individual companies in the sector depends on the extent to which they meet the needs of their customers.

Rainham Marshes

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on assistance given or offered to MCA and Universal Studios in respect of the proposed theme park development at Rainham Marshes.

Mr. Leigh: The Government have made no offer of financial assistance to MCA for the development of its proposed theme park at Rainham Marshes. However, the Government have offered MCA limited financial assistance for further site survey work at Rainham Marshes to establish the degree of contamination of the site and the likely remedial costs.

Morocco

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether any arms are being sold by British companies to Morocco.

Mr. Sainsbury: Defence and defence-related equipment for sale to Morocco or elsewhere which is subject to export control under the Export of Goods (Control) Order 1989 requires an export licence. In the past 12 months nine licences have been issued to British companies for the export of such equipment to Morocco.

Multi-fibre Arrangement

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement outlining the principles which are currently being adopted by United Kingdom negotiators on the future of the multi-fibre arrangement.

Mr. Sainsbury: The United Kingdom supports the EC's policy that the multi-fibre arrangement should be phased out over a transitional period after the expiry of its latest extension next year. This would be part of a general settlement of the GATT Uruguay round bringing about stronger GATT rules and disciplines and improvements in market access which will assist British textile exporters.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assessment he has made of the effect on the numbers of jobs lost in each of the next

10 years if the multi-fibre arrangement is phased out prior to agreements being reached to tighten general agreement on tariffs and trade rules on dumping, subsidies, protection of intellectual property and increased access to markets.

Mr. Sainsbury: The study of Professor Silberston for my Department concluded that the termination of the MFA would lead to job losses of between 16,000 and 33,000 in the textile and clothing industry. It was based on the assumption of an *immediate* end to the MFA, but did not specify over what period the jobs would be lost. Furthermore, the estimate took no account of the effect of changes in the GATT rules mentioned by my hon. Friend. Such changes, and the phasing out being over a period of years, will mitigate considerably the effect of the ending of the MFA. It is not practical to make assessments in the form he suggests. In any event, it remains the European Community's policy, which the Government support, that the phasing out of the MFA should be part of a final Uruguay round package covering agreements on market access and strengthened rules and disciplines.

Rolls-Royce Engines

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what action he has taken regarding the proposed export of attack/trainer aircraft powered by Rolls-Royce engines by Yugoslavia to Burma in contravention of the United Kingdom's export licensing agreement for the engines.

Mr. Sainsbury: It has been the practice of this and previous Administrations not to comment on individual export licensing cases.

Aid and Trade Provision

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) if his Department has considered criticisms made by the National Audit Office of the administration and control of aid and trade provision; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if his Department has considered comments made by the Public Accounts Committee on the administration and control of aid and trade provision; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 14 November 1990]:* The aid and trade provision—ATP—forms part of Britain's overseas aid programme. It is jointly administered by my Department and by the Overseas Development Administration. Both Departments consider all reports which comment on the administration and control of ATP. In particular they have considered the recent National Audit Office report on "Bilateral Aid to India" and the subsequent Public Accounts Committee report.

The ODA reply to the Public Accounts Committee report on bilateral aid to India was published in a Treasury minute on the 19-25 report from the Committee of Public Accounts in October 1990 (Cm 1247). A copy is available in the Library of the House.

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if his Department has considered comments made by the Foreign Affairs Committee on the administration and control of aid and trade provision; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 14 November 199*
The aid and trade provision—ATP—forms part
Britain's overseas aid programme. It is jointly admi
tered by my Department and by the Overs
Development Administration. Both Departments consi
all reports which comment on the administration
control of ATP. In particular they have considered
report of the Foreign Affairs Committee "Bilateral A
Country Programmes" published in 1987.

The Government's reply to the report was publishe
observations by the Government to the report publishe
October 1987. A copy is available in the Library of
House.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Millionaires

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequ
what information he has as to the number of millionai
in Britain in 1974, 1979, 1984 and 1989, or the la
convenient date.

Mr. Maude: Estimates of the number of individual
the United Kingdom owning wealth of £1 million or m
in each of the years 1979 to 1988 are available in table
of an article entitled "Estimates of the distribution
personal wealth" in the October 1990 edition of *Econo
Trends*. The estimates for 1987 and 1988 are provisio
Estimates for 1974 are not readily available.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Chancellor of
Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Re*
up-to-date figures, on the same basis as those provide
the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (
Brown) in the *Official Report*, 5 July, columns 699-7
giving figures for Scotland only and including the effect
the introduction of the community charge.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 19 November 1990]:* I
not possible to produce separate estimates for Scotla

EC Taxation

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Chancellor of
Exchequer what is his present policy in respect of
introduction of European Community-wide taxat
measures.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 19 November 1990]:*
shall continue to support progress towards removing fi
barriers where this is necessary to achieve the effici
working of the single market, but centrally determined
harmonisation is neither necessary nor desirable for
purpose.

Monetary Aggregates

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Chancellor of
Exchequer if he will give his latest estimates for the gro
in monetary aggregates; and if he will make a statem

Mr. Maples *[holding answer 16 November 1990]:*
provisional money figures for October are contained in
Bank of England's press release of 20 November, a cop
which is held in the Library of the House. The growth
of narrow money, M0, was inside its target range of
5 per cent. for the third successive month.

HEALTH

Expenditure

14. **Mr. Moate:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the latest figures for capital expenditure and revenue expenditure on the national health service hospital services; and what were the comparable figures in 1979.

Mr. Waldegrave: This year expenditure on the hospital and community health services in England is expected to be some £17·2 billion, a real terms increase of 40 per cent. over the 1978-79 figure of £4·9 billion.

South East Thames RHA

15. **Mr. Bellotti:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has any plans to increase the funding for the South East Thames regional health authority.

Mr. Dorrell: Between 1978-79 and 1989-90 spending in the South East Thames region has increased from £419 million to £1,220 million, or nearly 25 per cent. in real terms. I am confident that South East Thames will continue to benefit from the development of the NHS made possible by this Government's stewardship.

Specialist Services

16. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what arrangements he has in place for the monitoring of specialist services provided to health authorities in the Northern region.

Mr. Dorrell: The provision of health services in any region is a matter for district and regional health authorities.

Waiting Lists

17. **Mrs. Currie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the initiatives by the John Yates Consultancy on hospital waiting lists.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This initiative has been very successful. The number of patients wating over one year in the 43 lists studied by John Yates's team last year has virtually been halved. Early results from this year's study of 100 long lists are very encouraging—numbers waiting over one year have already reduced by a quarter, and further reductions are expected by the end of March 1991.

Breast Cancer

19. **Mr. Viggers:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on recent developments in the diagnosis of breast cancer.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The United Kingdom is the first country in the European Community to launch a nationwide programme of breast cancer screening based on computerised call and recall. By detecting cancers at an early stage the programme will help to reduce mortality from this disease. It will make a significant contribution to the health of the women of this country.

Dentists

20. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how the level of dentists' remuneration will be affected by the new dental contract.

Mr. Dorrell: The amount dentists are paid is a matter for the independent doctors and dentists review body.

North East Thames RHA

21. **Mr. Spearing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of the capital expenditure of the North East Thames health authority he expects it to obtain from sales of land.

Mr. Dorrell: I understand from North East Thames regional health authority that it currently expects that £23·7 million of total capital expenditure by authorities within the region will be funded from land sales. This is equivalent to 23 per cent. of total capital spending.

Financial Deficits

22. **Ms. Primarolo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action health authorities are taking to clear financial deficits.

Mr. Dorrell: Measures to be taken by individual health authorities are for agreement between the region and the district concerned.

Health Services, Wakefield

23. **Mr. O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he last met the chairman of the Yorkshire health authority to discuss health services in Wakefield.

Mr. Dorrell: My right hon. and learned Friend the then Secretary of State for Health met Sir Bryan Askew on 26 September 1990 to discuss health service issues.

Minor Surgery

24. **Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what changes there have been in the number of minor surgery sessions being carried out by general practitioners since April.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Following the introduction on 1 April 1990 of a specific payment for GPs providing minor surgery, over 40,000 minor surgery sessions have been held. This means that some 200,000 patients have been saved the inconvenience of attending out-patient departments. Earlier information is not available.

Residential Care

25. **Mr. McAvoy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the implications for his policy on residential care of the findings of the General Medical Association's recent survey.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I understand that the hon. Member's question concerns a survey carried out among its members by the Association of Metropolitan Authorities which inquired about the funding of independent care homes. Our policy remains that residential care should continue to be available for those who need it. The Government's community care proposals, which become fully effective from April 1993, should ensure that this is the case.

27. **Mrs. Golding:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he is taking to ensure that persons in residential care are enabled to have individual rooms if they so desire.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Tottenham (Mr. Grant) earlier today.

NHS Trusts

26. **Mr. Stern:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the first round of applications for self-governing trust status.

29. **Mr. Bradley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he expects to announce his decisions on national health service trust applications.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Public consultation has finished on applications for self-governing status. My right hon. Friend will consider the results of the consultation together with the applications and will announce his decision shortly.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list all the letters of interest submitted to the trust unit for consideration for possible trust status applications.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: All units which expressed an interest following the issue of EL(89)MB 64, a copy of which is available in the Library, are shown in the table. Not all of these subsequently made a formal application to become a trust in April 1991. Expressions of interest are now being received from units which may wish to become NHS trusts from April 1992. My right hon. Friend hopes to make an announcement soon.

National Health Service Trusts—List of expressions of interest

Northern
Aycliffe Hospital and Mental Health Services
Blood Transfusion Service (Northern RHA)
Darlington Hospital and Community Services
Freeman Hospital, Newcastle
Hartlepool District
Mental Illness Services in Gateshead
Newcastle General Hospital
Newcastle Mental Health Services
Northumbrian Ambulance Service
Northgate Hospital
North Tyneside District
North Tees Hospital and Community Services
North West Durham hospital and community services
Royal Victoria Infirmary and Dental Hospital
South West Durham Community Services
South West Durham Mental Health Services
—16

Yorkshire
Bradford Acute Services
Bradford—Psychiatric Unit Hospital Trust
Calderdale Hospitals, Calderdale Health Authority
Leeds General Infirmary and associated Hospitals
Grimsby DGH and associated services
High Royds Hospital Mental Health Services, Leeds Western
St. James's University Hospital, Leeds
Seacroft and Killingbeck Hospitals, Leeds Eastern
Wakefield District—Mental Health Unit
Wharfedale General Hospital, Leeds Western
—10

Trent
Bassetlaw
Doncaster Royal Infirmary and Montagu Hospital
Lincolnshire Ambulance Service
Nether Edge Hospital, Sheffield
Northern General Hospital, Sheffield
University Hospital, Nottingham
Royal Hallamshire Hospital, Sheffield
Children's Hospital, Sheffield
South Lincolnshire Mental Handicap Services
—9

East Anglian
East Suffolk Community Services
East Suffolk Psychiatric Services
Great Yarmouth and Waveney Priority Services
Newmarket General Hospital
Norfolk Ambulances
Peterborough DGH, Edith Cavell DGH, Stamfo
Rutland Hospital
West Norfolk and Wisbech Acute Services
West Norfolk and Wisbech Community Services
—8

North West Thames
Central Middlesex Hospital
East Hertfordshire Acute Services Unit
East Hertfordshire Priority and Community Servic
Harefield Hospital
Hillingdon Hospital
Mount Vernon Hospital
North Hertfordshire Acute and Community Service
North West Hertfordshire Priority Services Unit
Northwick Park Hospital
Westminster and Westminster Children's Hospitals
—10

North East Thames
Basildon and Thurrock HA
Brentwood Community Hospital
Central North London Mental Health Unit
The London Hospital Group
Mid Essex Acute Unit
The Royal Free Hospital
North Middlesex Hospital
Royal London Homeopathic Hospital
Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital
The Royal National Throat Nose and Ear Hospital
City and Hackney (St. Bart's, Homerton and St
Hospital Trust)
St. Barholomew's Hospital
St. Margaret's Hospital, Epping
St. Peter's Group of Hospitals
Southend District Services
Tavistock and Portman Clinics
Harwich Hospital
North East Essex Acute Unit
North East Essex Mental Handicap Unit
North East Essec Mental Health Unit
Waltham Forest Mental Health Unit
Waltham Forest HA
West Essex Priority Care Services
—23

SE Thames
Bexley HA—Mental Health Community Services
Brighton Acute Services
Bromley Acute Services
Bromley Mental Health Services
King's/Camberwell and associated Community Serv
Conquest Hospital, Hastings HA
Dartford & Gravesham HA—Proposed DGH
Eastbourne Acute Services
Guy's (and Lewisham Hospitals and associated MI
Lewisham and North Southwark HA—Mental
Services
Lewisham Hospital Unit
Maidstone DGH
Queen Mary's Hospital, Sidcup (Erith and District H
Community
Queen Victoria Hospital, East Grinstead
St. Thomas' Hospital (and associated Community
Sevenoaks Hospital
SE Kent HA—Community Services
SE Thames RHA Commercial Services Directorate
Tunbridge Wells Mental Handicap Unit
West Lambeth HA—Priority Care Unit
William Harvey and Buckland Hospitals—SE Kent
—21

SW Thames
Croydon Community Unit
Croydon Mental Handicap Unit
Croydon HA—Mental Illness Unit
East Surrey HA—Acute and Community Services Unit
East Surrey HA—Combined MI/Mental Handicap Unit
Kingston Hospital
Mid Downs East Unit
Mid Downs West Unit
Mid Surrey General Unit
Mid Surrey HA—Mental Illness Unit
North West Surrey HA—Acute Unit
North West Surrey HA—Mental Handicap and Mental Health Units
St. George's Group Trust, Wandsworth HA
St. Helier and Sutton Hospitals
South West Surrey Acute Unit
Worthing and Southlands Hospitals, Worthing HA
Weybridge Hospital
—17

Wessex
Bournemouth Acute Unit, East Dorset HA
Christchurch Hospital, East Dorset HA
Lymington Hospitals
Mental Health Services, East Dorset HA
North West Wiltshire Community Service, Bath HA
Psychiatric Division, Basingstoke HA
Royal National Hospital for Rheumatic Diseases
Swindon HA—All District Services
Treloar Chase Unit, Basingstoke HA
West Dorset Community Services
West Dorset General Hospital (Acute) Services
West Dorset Mental Health Services
—12

Oxford
Aylesbury Vale Primary Care Services Unit
East Berkshire Mental Handicap Unit
Nuffield Orthopaedic Centre
West Berkshire Mental Health Unit
Wrexham Park Hospital (Acute Unit)
Wycombe District
—6

South Western
Avon College of Health
Bristol
Bristol Paediatric Services
Bristol Homoeopathic Hospital
East Gloucestershire NHS Trust [Cheltenham and District]
Cornwall Mental Handicap Services
Cornwall Community Services
Royal Cornwall Hospitals [East Cornwall Acute Services]
East Somerset [(Yeovil): Acute/Primary Care Services]
Exeter Community Services
North Devon
Plymouth Acute Services
Supplies Function—Regionwide (South Western RHA)
South Devon Health Care Trust [Torbay DHA]
West Cornwall [Acute Services]
Weston (Unit, Bristol and Weston HA)
West Somerset [Musgrove: Acute Services]
Wonford Acute Services
—18

West Midlands
Alexandra Hospital
Bridgnorth Cottage Hospital (incl. community) (Shropshire)
Bromsgrove Community Unit (Bromsgrove and Redditch)
Mid Staffordshire Community Unit
Coventry and Warwick Hospitals (incl. Paybody) (Coventry)
Ellesmere Cottage Hospital (Shropshire)
Good Hope DGH/Northcroft/Jaffray/Community (N. Birmingham)
Highcroft, Mental Illness Hospital (N. Birmingham)
Lady Forrester Cottage Hospital (Much Wenlock, Shropshire)
Walsall Acute Services [Manor DGH]
Oswestry and District Hospital (inc. Community) (Shropshire)
Robert Jones and Agnes Hunt Orthopaedic Hospital (Shropshire)
Royal Orthopaedic Hospital (South Birmingham)
Royal Shrewsbury Hospital (Shropshire)
Rugby District Services
Mid Staffordshire Mental Health Unit [St. George's Hospital]
St. Margaret's, Mental Handicap Hospital, (Walsall)
Walsgrave DGH, Coventry
—18

Mersey
Arrowe Park and Clatterbridge Hospitals
Broadgreen Hospital, exc. Mersey Regional Cardio-Thoracic Unit
Cranage Hall, Crewe
Crewe, Psychiatric and Community Services
Halton, combined Hospital and Community Services
Halton Community Services
Leighton Hospital, Crewe (Acute Services)
Liverpool Community Health Services
Liverpool Dental Hospital
Liverpool Mental Health Services
Liverpool Obstetrics and Gynaecology Services
Regional Adult Cardio-Thoracic Unit (RACTU), Liverpool
Macclesfield Community and Mental Handicap Services
Macclesfield DGH (Acute Services)
Macclesfield Mental Health Services
Royal Liverpool Children's Hospital (Alder Hey)
Royal Liverpool Hospital
St. Helens and Knowsley Community Health Services
Southport DGH (Acute Services)
Southport and Formby Psychiatric/Community Services
Walton and Fazakerley Hospitals, South Sefton
Warrington DGH
Whiston and St. Helen's Hospital
Wirral Community and Support Hospitals
—24

North Western
Christie Hospital [South Manchester HA]
Central Manchester Hospital and Community Services
Royal Preston Hospital, Preston HA
South Manchester HA Community Unit
Stepping Hill Hospital plus Stockport Infirmary, Stockport HA
Wrightington Hospital, West Lancashire HA
—6

SHA
Eastman Dental Hospital
—1

Total 199

Mr. Terry Fields: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many hospitals in the north-west have applied to opt out; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Ten applications from units in the Mersey and North Western regions which wish to become operational as NHS trusts on 1 April 1991 have been received.

My right hon. Friend hopes to be able to announce his decision shortly on all applications from those units which have applied to become operational from April 1991.

Cornwall Air Ambulance

28. **Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a decision on funding of the Cornwall air ambulance.

Mr. Dorrell: We are funding an independent evaluation of air ambulance services, costing £250,000, and will take a decision on the funding of the services themselves in the light of that evaluation.

I have written to the hon. Member and to other hon. Members from Cornwall to explain why there will be no central contribution to the funding of the Cornwall air ambulance service until we have that evaluation.

Radiation

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) whether he has completed his consideration of proposals for further studies of the children of individuals who have received radiation doses from occupational exposure;

(2) whether the data held on the national registry of radiation workers at the National Radiological Protection Board have yet been linked with that on the national registry of childhood tumours.

Mr. Dorrell: The proposals for detailed epidemiological studies have now been refereed by independent experts and the successful applicants have been notified. Work is expected to start shortly on finalisation of contractual arrangements. The proposal to link data held on the national registry of radiation workers with that on the national registry of childhood tumours is currently being piloted by the Office of Population, Censuses and S Final decisions will depend on the outcome of t study.

Pregnancies

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of St Health whether he will list *(a)* the total number a of pregnancies to women aged 17, 18, 19 and 20 y each year from 1970 to 1989, respectively, with the broken down into live births, stillbirths and aborti *(b)* the above breakdown for all girls aged under for 1987.

Mr. Dorrell: The information requested for t 1970-1988 is given in the tables. Figures for conc occurring in 1989 will not be available until autum Conceptions to women usually resident in Engla Wales which led to a maternity or were termin abortion under the Abortion Act 1967 are include which led to an illegal or spontaneous abort excluded.

(a) Numbers and rates of conception by outcome to women aged 17 to 20, 1970-88
England and Wales

	Number of conceptions (thousands)				*Conceptions terminated by abortion*	*Conception rates per 1,000 women in age-group*			
	Total conceptions	*Conceptions leading to maternities*				*Total conceptions*	*Conceptions leading to maternities*		
		All maternities	*Live births*	*Still births*			*All maternities*	*Live births*	*Still births*
Age of woman at conception and year of conception									
17									
1970	27,385	23,673	23,384	289	3,712	84·0	72·6	71·7	0·9
1971	27,587	22,577	22,319	258	5,010	83·6	68·5	67·7	0·8
1972	26,574	20,597	20,356	241	5,977	82·8	64·2	63·4	0·8
1973	25,896	19,759	19,508	251	6,137	78·4	59·8	59·0	0·8
1974	24,994	18,435	18,236	199	6,559	73·8	54·4	53·8	0·6
1975	23,349	16,747	16,569	178	6,602	66·9	48·0	47·4	0·5
1976	21,681	15,165	14,999	166	6,516	60·5	42·3	41·9	0·5
1977	21,757	15,154	14,987	167	6,603	59·1	41·2	40·7	0·5
1978	23,518	16,256	16,090	166	7,262	61·2	42·3	41·9	0·4
1979	24,868	16,694	16,550	144	8,174	63·3	42·5	42·1	0·4
1980	23,894	15,791	15,664	127	8,103	60·0	39·6	39·3	0·3
1981	23,179	14,990	14,882	108	8,189	56·8	36·7	36·5	0·3
1982	22,964	15,049	14,940	109	7,915	55·8	36·6	36·3	0·3
1983	22,575	14,452	14,342	110	8,123	56·0	35·9	35·6	0·3
1984	24,209	15,642	15,541	101	8,567	61·4	39·6	39·4	0·3
1985	24,619	15,922	15,820	102	8,697	64·2	41·5	41·3	0·3
1986	24,776	16,101	15,999	102	8,675	64·8	42·1	41·8	0·3
1987	24,809	15,915	15,810	105	8,894	67·1	43·0	42·8	0·3
1988	25,423	15,872	15,793	79	9,551	67·6	42·2	42·0	0·2
18									
1970	37,624	33,309	32,904	405	4,315	116·9	103·5	102·2	1·3
1971	36,656	31,165	30,811	354	5,491	111·7	95·0	93·9	1·1
1972	35,399	28,943	28,615	328	6,456	106·9	87·4	86·4	1·0
1973	32,885	26,444	26,165	279	6,441	102·0	82·0	81·2	0·9
1974	31,439	24,938	24,661	277	6,501	94·8	75·2	74·3	0·8
1975	29,952	23,555	23,338	217	6,397	88·0	69·2	68·5	0·6
1976	27,563	21,114	20,871	243	6,449	78·5	60·1	59·4	0·7
1977	28,270	21,522	21,310	212	6,748	78·6	59·8	59·2	0·6
1978	30,344	22,842	22,627	215	7,502	81·9	61·7	61·1	0·6
1979	32,752	24,206	24,014	192	8,546	84·8	62·7	62·2	0·5
1980	32,093	23,378	23,189	189	8,715	81·2	59·2	58·7	0·5
1981	30,564	21,894	21,764	130	8,670	76·2	54·6	54·3	0·3
1982	30,325	21,769	21,626	143	8,556	74·0	53·1	52·8	0·3
1983	29,860	21,196	21,070	126	8,664	72·2	51·2	50·9	0·3
1984	31,382	22,302	22,178	124	9,080	77·9	55·3	55·0	0·3

	Number of conceptions (thousands)				Conceptions terminated by abortion	Conception rates per 1,000 women in age-group				Conceptions terminated by abortion
	Total conceptions	Conceptions leading to maternities				Total conceptions	Conceptions leading to maternities			
		All maternities	Live births	Still births			All maternities	Live births	Still births	
1985	31,939	22,235	22,109	126	9,704	80·7	56·2	55·8	0·3	24·5
1986	32,177	22,456	22,357	99	9,721	83·6	58·4	58·1	0·3	25·3
1987	33,648	23,114	22,983	131	10,534	87·7	60·3	59·9	0·3	27·5
1988	32,208	21,672	21,550	122	10,536	86·9	58·5	58·2	0·3	28·4
19										
1970	45,853	41,489	41,048	441	4,364	136·6	123·6	122·3	1·3	13·0
1971	42,770	37,408	37,018	390	5,362	130·9	114·5	113·3	1·2	16·4
1972	41,406	35,042	34,677	365	6,364	125·7	106·4	105·3	1·1	19·3
1973	39,080	32,766	32,403	363	6,314	117·4	98·4	97·3	1·1	19·0
1974	35,834	29,635	29,357	278	6,199	110·7	91·6	90·7	0·9	19·2
1975	34,216	28,177	27,908	269	6,039	102·5	84·4	83·6	0·8	18·1
1976	32,652	26,617	26,367	250	6,035	95·3	77·7	77·0	0·7	17·6
1977	33,424	27,303	27,061	242	6,121	94·7	77·4	76·7	0·7	17·3
1978	35,872	28,953	28,705	248	6,919	99·1	80·0	79·3	0·7	19·1
1979	38,110	30,015	29,766	249	8,095	102·4	80·6	80·0	0·7	21·7
1980	37,475	29,187	28,975	212	8,288	96·4	75·1	74·6	0·5	21·3
1981	37,458	29,087	28,886	201	8,371	94·0	73·0	72·5	0·5	21·0
1982	36,614	27,961	27,784	177	8,653	90·1	68·8	68·3	0·4	21·3
1983	35,318	26,872	26,719	153	8,446	84·8	64·5	64·2	0·4	20·3
1984	36,993	27,691	27,517	174	9,302	89·3	66·9	66·4	0·4	22·5
1985	37,157	27,489	27,351	138	9,668	91·7	67·9	67·5	0·3	23·9
1986	37,205	27,419	27,271	148	9,786	93·5	68·9	68·6	0·4	24·6
1987	39,048	27,911	27,771	140	11,137	101·1	72·2	71·9	0·4	28·8
1988	38,475	26,878	26,731	147	11,597	100·0	69·8	69·5	0·4	30·1
20										
1970	54,244	49,573	48,992	581	4,671	155·4	142·0	140·4	1·7	13·4
1971	49,030	43,637	43,158	479	5,393	145·6	129·6	128·2	1·4	16·0
1972	45,760	39,838	39,451	387	5,922	139·3	121·3	120·1	1·2	18·0
1973	43,844	37,743	37,318	425	6,101	132·3	113·9	112·6	1·3	18·4
1974	41,290	35,365	35,009	356	5,925	123·7	105·9	104·9	1·1	17·8
1975	38,396	32,730	32,441	289	5,666	117·9	100·5	99·6	0·9	17·4
1976	36,336	30,916	30,647	269	5,420	108·3	92·1	91·3	0·8	16·2
1977	38,059	32,437	32,159	278	5,622	110·5	94·2	93·4	0·8	16·3
1978	40,902	34,302	34,064	238	6,600	115·1	96·5	95·9	0·7	18·6
1979	43,025	35,601	35,350	251	7,424	118·3	97·9	97·2	0·7	20·4
1980	43,026	35,296	35,055	241	7,730	114·8	94·2	93·5	0·6	20·6
1981	41,931	33,852	33,633	219	8,079	107·2	86·5	86·0	0·6	20·7
1982	42,104	33,836	33,653	183	8,268	104·9	84·3	83·8	0·5	20·6
1983	40,384	32,257	32,051	206	8,127	98·3	78·5	78·0	0·5	19·8
1984	42,227	33,399	33,205	194	8,828	101·2	80·0	79·6	0·5	21·1
1985	42,140	32,744	32,554	190	9,396	101·1	78·6	78·1	0·5	22·5
1986	42,376	32,348	32,178	170	10,028	104·0	79·4	78·9	0·4	24·6
1987	43,712	32,808	32,650	158	10,904	109·3	82·0	81·6	0·4	27·3
1988	43,087	31,515	31,362	153	11,572	111·1	81·2	80·9	0·4	29·8

(b) Numbers and rates of conceptions by outcome to women aged under 16, 1987
England and Wales

Number of conceptions				Conceptions terminated by abortion	Conception rates per 1,000 women aged 13 to 15				Conceptions terminated by abortion
Total conceptions	Conceptions leading to maternities				Total conceptions	Conceptions leading to maternities			
	All maternities	Live births	Still births			All maternities	Live births	Still births	
9,135	4,185	4,159	26	4,950	9·3	4·2	4·2	0·0	5·0

Overseas Adoptions

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list *(a)* the voluntary organisation agencies which may arrange overseas adoptions and *(b)* the charges made by each local authority for providing home study reports.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Department has written to all approved adoption societies explaining that we would be willing to discuss with them proposals for the development of arrangements for inter-country adoption.

Social services departments and approved adoption societies are also encouraged to co-operate in the provision of inter-country adoption services.

Copies of the letter are available in the Library, together with a list of approved adoption societies.

The level of charges to meet the cost of assessment of adopters and of reports in connection with inter-country adoption are a matter for local authorities and for approved societies which provide reports.

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what post-adoption monitoring procedures are recommended by his Department to local authorities with regard to the adoption of children from abroad by British citizens.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: There is no provision in adoption law or practice for monitoring of any adoptive family after a court has made an adoption order, although post-adoption support can be provided, where needed, in accordance with section 1 of the Adoption Act 1976. The adoption of children from overseas is among the topics on which the Department expects to commission research.

Braille

Sir Russell Johnston: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will review the decision to cut the Royal National Institute for the Blind's braille grant;

(2) what representations his Department has received concerning the Royal National Institute for the Blind's braille grant.

Mr. Dorrell: I refer the hon. Member to the reply my noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health gave to Lord Carter on 23 October at columns 1237-40 in another place. We have no plans to review our decision to reduce the Royal National Institute for the Blind's braille grant this year. We have received some 300 letters on the subject from hon. Members and members of the public. My noble Friend met a delegation from the Royal National Institute for the Blind on 19 November.

Kidney Machines

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the number of kidney dialysis machines in operation at the present time by the national health service; and if he will give an estimate of the number of patients currently diagnosed as in need of dialysis.

Mr. Dorrell: This information is not collected centrally.

Private Residential Homes

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the number of owners of private residential homes who have had their certificates withdrawn since 1984 and the reasons for the withdrawal.

Mr. Dorrell: The number of persons notified to the Department whose registrations have been cancelled under the Registered Homes Act 1984 since it came into operation on 1 January 1985 is as follows:

	Residential Care Homes	*Nursing Homes*	*Dually Registered Homes*
1985	2	3	—
1986	16	5	—
1987	28	4	—
1988	54	15	
1989	44	1	

The reasons given for cancellations report concerned:

the fitness of persons involved in running th cases

the fitness of premises, or their staffing: 5 c

the conduct of the home or services c provided: 24 cases

conviction of an offence under the Registe Act 1984: 1 case

urgent closure an application to a Justice of 6 cases

In a number of cases, more than one reason w

Social Service Review Cases

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of Health, further to his answer of 12 Novemb *Report,* column *59,* if he will list for all loca social service departments the number of case under review by his Department and the leng each case has been outstanding.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The informati available in the form requested.

Operations (Cancellations)

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State how many health authorities have canc emergency operations in order to clear financ

Mr. Bill Michie: To ask the Secretary of Health how many health authorities have non-emergency operations in order to clea deficits.

Mr. Dorrell: Information on cancelled opera held centrally. Proper financial planning to deficits should not result in operations being c

Medical Negligence

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secreta for Health what information he has, by health of the amounts which have been paid out in co for medical negligence suits or related actions the last five years for which figures are available in each case the field of medicine in which that

Mr. Dorrell: Until 1 January 1990 the medi organisations paid compensation for medical actions in relation to the medical or dental sta authorities. The information was therefore n centrally.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secreta for Health what guidance his Department has g formal or informal, to health authorities a which they should hold in contingency funds a suits for medical negligence; whether that guid to any particular field of medicine; and if he statement.

Mr. Dorrell: It is for health authorities to de their cash allocations, whether to set aside mo purpose.

From 1 January 1990 health authorities took over, from the medical defence organisations, the financial liabilities for medical negligence by hospital doctors. This meant that the contribution within individual doctors' remuneration towards the cost of doctors' subscriptions was no longer needed since membership ceased to be a condition of employment. The Department indicated that authorities would wish to identify this expenditure and set it aside to help meet the cost of claims paid.

In addition, most regional health authorities have arrangements for assisting their district health authorities with the legal costs and damages of large settlements and in the departmental guidance on claims for medical negligence, issued on 12 December 1989—health circular (89)34, a copy of which is available in the Library—the Department recommended that regional health authorities should have such arrangements.

There was no reference to particular fields of medicine in either context.

Population, West Midlands

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the population aged 18 years and over of each authority in the west midlands.

Mr. Dorrell: The mid-1989 estimates of population aged 18 and over for each district in the West Midlands metropolitan county are as follows:

	Thousands
Birmingham	746·8
Coventry	230·8
Dudley	238·8
Sandwell	226·6
Solihull	157·7
Walsall	201·9
Wolverhampton	190·6

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list for each authority in the west midlands the latest information on the size of the electoral roll.

Mr. Dorrell: The numbers of local government electors on registers which came into use on 16 February 1990 in districts within the West Midlands metropolitan county were as follows:

District	*Electors*
Birmingham	736,420
Coventry	233,003
Dudley	242,844
Sandwell	229,498
Solihull	157,284
Walsall	200,236
Wolverhampton	185,206

Hospital Security

Sir Neil Macfarlane: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will conduct an urgent review of national health service hospital security arrangements.

Mr. Dorrell: No. Appropriate security arrangements for the protection of both patients and staff is the responsibility of and can best be determined by health authorities in the light of their knowledge of their premises and the degree of access necessary for patients and their visitors. I understand that the National Associatio Health Authorities and Trusts is planning to ho security conference next year to look at security matt the national health service. It is proposed that dele from each health authority are invited.

National Health Service Infected Blood

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for H (1) how many individuals have lodged court cases clai damages for contracting HIV through infected nat health service blood or blood products; and, of those, many are haemophiliacs;

(2) how many people who have taken court actio plaintiffs claiming damages in respect of contracting through national health service infected blood or b products have died since they issued proceedings; an these, how many are haemophiliacs;

(3) how many of the court cases claiming damage contracting HIV through national health service infe blood or blood products have been lodged by indivi in their own right; how many have been lodged on b of minors; and, in each of these groups, how many haemophiliacs;

(4) what information he has on how many people have contracted HIV through national health se infected blood or blood products have not lodged c cases claiming damages; and, of those, how many haemophiliacs.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 12 Nove 1990]:* We are not aware that any writs have been se on the Government by individuals infected with HIV f whole blood. Some writs have been served on he authorities, but we do not have details.

There are 962 plaintiffs pursuing allegations in res of infection with HIV through blood products. includes 775 claims in respect of haemophiliacs, of w 107 are in respect of minors. An estimated HIV-infected haemophiliacs have not lodged court c Ninety-one cases are being pursued in respect haemophiliacs who have died, but it is not known many of these have died since the start of the litiga

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Written Questions

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Lord President of Council if he will produce a table to show in descen order the 30 Members who tabled the most wri questions last Session, indicating in each case how m were tabled.

Mr. MacGregor *[holding answer 12 November 19* The information requested is as follows:

Member	*Total number of written questions tabled*
1. Mr. Austin Mitchell	820
2. Mr. Frank Dobson	705
3. Mr. Dafydd Elis Thomas	673
4. Mr. Paul Flynn	639
5. Mr. Dafydd Wigley	601
6. Mr. Graham Allen	581
7. Mr. Martin Redmond	580
8. Mr. Ron Davies	508

Member	Total number of written questions tabled
9. Mr. Keith Vaz	500
10. Mr. Alun Michael	472
11. Mr. Tony Banks	459
12. Mr. Simon Hughes	440
13. Mr. Tam Dalyell	437
14. Mr. Harry Cohen	435
15. Dr. David Clark	402
16. Mr. Barry Jones	390
17. Rt. Hon. Jack Ashley	363
18. Mr. Rhodri Morgan	363
19. Mrs. Teresa Gorman	316
20. Mr. Jim Cousins	315
21. Mr. Nicholas Bennett	308
22. Mr. Michael Meacher	294
23. Ms. Joan Walley	291
24. Mr. Matthew Taylor	290
25. Mr. William Ross	286
26. Mr. Malcolm Bruce	285
27. Mr. Tony Lloyd	281
28. Mr. Martin O'Neill	278
29. Mr. Gareth Wardell	275
30. Mr. David Alton	275

SCOTLAND

Dogs

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will outline the anticipated timetable for district councils to carry out specific new requirements regarding the control of dogs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: We shall shortly be discussing with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities the timetable for the introduction of the new dog control measures contained in the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

Political Donations

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what guidance he has issued to his junior Ministers in relation to the accepting of political donations in their capacities as Members of Parliament from companies or individuals whose business activities may be influenced by their ministerial responsibilities.

Mr. Rifkind: Donations made directly to party funds by companies or individuals are not a matter for Ministers.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many local authorities levy the standard charge for the poll tax at *(a)* zero, *(b)* one half, *(c)* one, *(d)* one and a half and *(e)* two times the personal charge for the area.

Mr. Lang: The information requested is for 1990-91 as follows:

Standard Community Charge Multiplier	Regional Councils	Islands Councils	District Councils
0	—	—	1
0·5	—	—	—
1	3	1	11
1·5	1	1	5
2	5	1	37

There are certain classes of premis
multiplier is prescribed as zero through
regional and islands councils have the p
additional classes for which authorities
different from their main multiplier.

"Efficient Planning"

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secr
Scotland what decisions have been mad
in the Scottish Development Depart
consultation paper "Efficient Planning"

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The
carefully considered the responses whic
the consultation paper "Efficient Pla
decided to proceed with the following p
which are included in the Planning and
published on Friday 16 November and s
be brought forward by Government an

(a) a power for local authorities to t
planning applications;
(b) a power for the Secretary of
planning appeal where the
unreasonably;
(c) lifting the six-month time limit
applicant who makes a false dec
(d) rationalising the secondary leg
development control;
(e) introducing new powers to cont
(f) simplifying the law on publi
applications;
(g) a power for local authorities to
conditions on landfill sites; and
(h) extending to minerals waste tips
the review of minerals site
compensation and after-care co

We have already made it clear that w
the proposal to increase planning
progressively until they cover 100 p
authorities' development control costs.

A consultation paper was issued o
outlining proposals to simplify the
designating simplified planning zones. S
extend permitted development rights in
we have concluded that a further
authorities to do this—the proposed
orders—will not be necessary if we de
our SPZ proposals.

In the light of the responses to the c
the Government have decided not to
following proposals:

(i) to allow the Secretary of State
procedure to be used to decide
This would have removed the m
longstanding right "to be heard"
(ii) to give special permission fo
householders if the local planning
decision on a planning applic
weeks;
(iii) dual jurisdiction for the local
Secretary of State following
non-determination, and re-defi
which development is said to com
considering further the technic
proposals;
(iv) charging for planning appeals.
saw this as a means of improving
planning appeals system. W
decided to give priority to othe
achieve this end;
(v) heritage measures. We have deci
Bill is not the right vehicle for s

Food Poisoning

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the number of cases notified to him from each health board in Scotland from 1980 until the latest date for which figures are available of *(a)* food poisoning in general, *(b)* salmonellosis, *(c)* salmon enteritidis, *(d)* salmonella enteritidis P4, *(e)* salmone *(f)* campylobacter and *(g)* listeriosis, respectively.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 14 Novem 1990]:* The information requested on food poisoning general and on campylobacter is shown in table 1. remaining information is available only at an all-Scotl level and is shown in table 2.

Table 1
Confirmed notifications of Food poisoning and Campylobacter

	Scotland	Argyll and Clyde	Ayrshire and Arran	Borders	Dumfries and Galloway	Fife	Forth Valley	Grampian	Greater Glasgow	Highland	Lanark-shire	Lothian	Orkney	Shetland	Tayside	We
1980 Food poisoning	2,299	105	201	23	108	70	63	154	296	17	93	[1]923	1	40	161	
Campylobacter	390	52	[2]—	—	11	—	8	169	93	—	3	—	—	—	54	
1981 Food poisoning	2,920	193	181	47	44	148	119	920	297	25	138	563	—	13	229	
Campylobacter	1,459	50	[2]—	—	58	155	32	375	86	—	36	548	—	—	119	
1982 Food poisoning	2,880	235	193	79	259	169	126	215	357	17	421	656	—	11	141	
Campylobacter	1,645	62	[2]—	31	127	129	31	499	95	—	67	480	—	14	110	
1983 Food poisoning	2,632	206	83	76	112	164	130	201	580	10	353	515	2	10	179	
Campylobacter	1,632	89	[2]—	24	136	110	60	377	100	—	77	515	—	8	136	
1984 Food poisoning	2,391	197	153	46	132	185	102	282	310	31	238	543	2	5	159	
Campylobacter	1,910	64	[2]—	25	171	146	121	371	130	1	142	596	—	10	133	
1985 Food poisoning	1,967	218	166	21	53	192	68	307	206	31	210	393	—	6	92	
Campylobacter	2,189	113	[2]—	37	193	110	89	424	177	2	198	656	—	15	175	
1986 Food poisoning	2,436	309	166	32	131	190	101	215	385	65	126	586	—	6	103	
Campylobacter	2,230	129	[2]—	39	162	77	104	455	201	98	158	616	—	9	182	
1987 Food poisoning	2,480	184	255	33	104	178	105	325	269	70	216	569	—	14	149	
Campylobacter	2,566	133	[2]—	35	207	102	162	465	285	120	174	677	1	10	195	
1988 Food poisoning	2,998	256	120	76	83	385	152	338	369	86	274	645	—	16	187	
Campylobacter	2,736	140	[2]—	56	174	184	168	567	300	119	216	597	—	11	204	
1989 Food poisoning	3,197	277	182	78	30	344	146	481	301	213	258	600	2	8	251	
Campylobacter	2,722	178	[2]—	64	24	180	153	599	331	129	265	584	—	19	195	

[1] Includes Campylobacter.
[2]— Not available.

Table 2
Cases of Salmonella sp., S. enteriditis, S. enteriditis pt4, and Listeriosis notified by laboratories in Scotland

	Salmonella sp. (Salmonellosis)	S. enteritidis	S. enteritidis pt4	Listeriosis
1980	1,577	113	28	10
1981	2,526	250	37	7
1982	2,621	279	42	8
1983	2,288	319	80	16
1984	2,221	433	183	9
1985	1,690	528	138	14
1986	2,015	619	282	10
1987	2,286	940	577	36
1988	2,580	1,345	945	36
1989	2,578	1,402	1,150	29

SOCIAL SECURITY

Community Charge

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what action he plans to take following the recommendation contained in the Social Services Select Committee's fifth report, that the Department of Social Security should monitor the effects of the community charge on disabled people.

Mr. Scott: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to him on 14 November at c. *178-79*.

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he has received concerning the effects of the community charge on disabled people.

Mr. Scott: Since 1 April 1990, 3,091 items correspondence have been received by the Departm about the community charge benefit scheme: it is not, I afraid, possible to identify the number relating particul to the effects of the community charge on disabled peo

Inflation

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for So Security when state benefits and pensions will be increa to take account of inflation; and what level of increase be expected.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: As my right hon. Friend Secretary of State announced in his statement to the Ho on 24 October, social security benefits will be uprated f 8 April 1991. Retirement pensions and other long-t

benefits will be increased by 10·9 per cent., in line with the retail prices index, and income-related benefits by 8·1 per cent., reflecting the increase in the RPI excluding housing costs. Housing benefit and income support provide separately for these costs.

Families

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will provide a breakdown on the 27 per cent. extra real expenditure on families with children between 1979 and now.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The value of support for families and children provided through a combination of child tax allowances and social security benefits specifically for this group has increased by 29 per cent. in real terms between 1978-79 and 1989-90, from £7·3 billion to £9·4 billion in 1989-90 prices. Real-terms expenditure on family credit was nearly eight times as much as for family income supplement in 1978-79, while payments for maternity have increased by over 11 per cent. Expenditure on child benefit, plus the value of child tax allowances, has fallen by nearly 12 per cent., largely because the number of children has fallen and partly because child benefit was not uprated in 1988-89 and 1989-90. Expenditure on one-parent benefit has increase nearly fourfold, while real-terms spending on income support and housing benefit to lone-parent families has risen nearly two and a half times.

Child Benefit

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is *(a)* the gross and *(b)* the net cost of raising child benefit by 10p in 1991-92 and 1992-93 for all children.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: It has been estimated that the extra costs in each year would be around *(a)* £63 million gross and *(b)* £47 million net.

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many families with children will be lifted off or brought into means-tested benefits as a result of the extra £1 in child benefit for the eldest child and the continued freeze for other children.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: It is impossible to give any meaningful estimate of people who have or will become dependent on income-related benefits as a direct consequence of the extra £1 in child benefit for the eldest child and the continued freeze for other children because the effects cannot be viewed in isolation. It is important to remember that eligible populations and their constituents for all income-related benefits change constantly as family incomes and circumstances change. Gross earnings have risen and our policies to reduce tax and national insurance contributions have succeeded in enabling families with children to keep more of their earnings.

Income Support

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what has been the percentage fall over the period since the end of April 1987 in the real value of the incomes of persons then receiving supplementary benefit and now receiving income support with transitional protection, assuming that they have no disregarded income.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The information requested is not available.

One-parent Benefit

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much will be saved from freezing one-parent benefit in 1991-92.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Not uprating one-parent benefit in 1991-92 saves nearly £19 million on the benefit itself but results in increased spending on family credit, housing benefit and community charge benefit.

Benefits System

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he expects to publish reports on the research projects mentioned in his answer to the hon. Member for Fylde (Mr. Jack) on 14 November, *Official Report*, column *180*.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Research projects by or for the Department are undertaken in the expectation of publication, but the timing and format are not decided until the project is completed.

Mobility Allowance

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what training medical boards have received on the effect of CM/205/88 on repeat claims of mobility allowance.

Mr. Scott: Medical board doctors have always been trained to take into account all the evidence, including the medical reports on which previous successful and unsuccessful claims have been based. Medical officers of the Department, who are required to advise adjudication officers deciding mobility allowance claims, were given further guidance in the light of the decision of the tribunal of commissioners.

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether adjudication officers at the mobility allowance unit have received guidance on the treatment of repeat claims in the light of CM/205/88.

Mr. Scott: Yes.

EMPLOYMENT

Outworkers

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) what is the median rate of pay for homeworkers/outworkers; what are the highest and lowest levels and what occupations predominate at these levels;

(2) if he will provide details of the number of people engaged in homework or outwork in the last five years; their sex, age, income and number of dependent children.

Mr. Forth: There are no routine statistics on homeworkers and outworkers. However, some information is available in Department of Employment research paper No. 60 "Home-based Work in Britain", published in May 1987. Tables 6.4 to 6.8 give earnings data; tables 3.1 to 3.4 provide details of the occupational distribution; and tables 4.1, 4.2, 4.8 and 4.15 contain breakdowns of numbers. All the data relate to 1981. A copy of the paper has been placed in the Library.

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will seek to extend health and safety legislation to include homeworkers.

Mr. Forth: Homeworkers, whether employed or self-employed, are already afforded the same protection as other workers under the provisions of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and subsidiary legislation.

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will provide details of the companies which have used homeworkers or outworkers in the last five years.

Mr. Forth: The informati equested is not available.

Employment Rights (Women)

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many letters he has had from individuals concerned with the employment rights of women in casualised labour in the last five years.

Mr. Forth: This information can be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Jobs, Lancashire

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the highest and lowest waged jobs on offer at the latest date for which figures are available for each jobcentre in Lancashire.

Mr. Jackson: Questions on operational matters in the Employment Service executive agency are the responsibility of Mike Fogden, the agency's chief executive, to whom I have referred this question for reply.

Civil Defence

Mr. Bill Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many civil servants are currently employed *(a)* full time and *(b)* part time by his Department on civil defence; what the total costs of employing staff on civil defence duties were in 1989-90; what the total costs of employing staff on civil defence duties are expected to be in 1990-91; and whether he has any plans for these staff to be transferred to work on other duties.

Mr. Jackson: Work in the Department of Employment on civil defence is carried out within guidelines laid down by the Government. The work is done by staff, both in London and in regional offices, who also have other duties; it is estimated that the total effort devoted to emergency planning is equivalent to about four full-time staff. The work cost some £108,000 in the 1989-90 financial year; this figure is expected to rise to £109,000 in the 1990-91 financial year. I have no plans to change the duties of the staff currently employed on this work.

Industrial Tribunals

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what instructions have been issued to the Central Office of Industrial Tribunals or to the regional offices concerning restrictions on the use of part-time chairmen; and what measures have been instituted to identify the effects on case hearings of any such instructions.

Mr. Forth: I refer the hon. Member to the reply which I gave to the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) on 19 November.

Clothing and Textiles

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many jobs have been shed in the United Kingdom clothing and textile industries in each of the last 15 years for which figures are available.

Mr. Jackson: Changes in the number of employees in the textile and clothing industries are supplied in the table.

Employees in textile and clothing industries
Textiles and clothing SIC 43 and 45 (excluding 4510 footwear)
Great Britain (thousands)

June	*Net yearly change*
1975	−60·4
1976	−31·5
1977	7·7
1978	−24·6
1979	−18·0
1980	−77·1
1981	−92·0
1982	−30·6
1983	−24·7
1984	−0·8
1985	5·7
1986	4·7
1987	−11·1
1988	7·3
1989	−16·2
1990	−10·1

Enterprise Allowance Scheme

Mr. Grylls: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many new firms have been created under the enterprise allowance scheme up to the present time.

Mr. Forth: Up to the present time over 540,000 people have started businesses under the enterprise allowance scheme.

Efficiency Scrutiny

Mr. Hayward: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to undertake new efficiency scrutinies.

Mr. Jackson: The Department of Employment group is going through a period of significant reorganisation as a result of the relocation of work out of London, the establishment of the Employment Service as an executive agency, and the setting up of training and enterprise councils. I have therefore decided to set up an efficiency scrutiny to examine internal communications within the group.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 21 November 1990

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Teachers' Pay

85. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what recent discussions he has had with trade union representatives regarding teachers' pay; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend would expect to meet the six teacher unions early next year to discuss the recommendations of the Interim Advisory Committee on School Teachers' Pay and Conditions.

Books

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will set out the level of expenditure on books at 1978-79 prices per child by local education authority in *(a)* 1978-79, *(b)* 1984-85 and *(c)* 1989-90.

Mr. Fallon: Information for 1978-79 is not available by individual local education authority, and the latest year for which figures are available is 1988-89. Cash figures for expenditure per pupil by local education authority for 1984-85 and 1988-89 are shown in tables 1 and 2. Table 3 shows the average expenditure per pupil in England at 1978-79 prices for 1978-79, 1984-85 and 1988-89.

While some local authorities' expenditure returns to Government Departments show separate figures for books, these can be misleading because of differing practices in attributing spending as between books and equipment. The tables therefore show combined spending figures for books and equipment, with figures as returned for books only in brackets. Even on the combined totals, coverage from authority to authority is likely to differ.

Table 1

Expenditure per pupil[1] 1984-85 *Cash (£)*

Local authority	*Nursery and primary schools*		*Secondary schools*	
	Books and equipment	*(of which books)*	*Books and equipment*	*(of which books)*
Barking	24·73	(6·79)	52·01	(11·92)
Barnet	28·71	(10·41)	51·02	(17·00)
Bexley	19·23	(6·01)	40·90	(13·02)
Brent	34·04	(8·53)	52·25	(13·35)
Bromley	30·05	(7·66)	50·88	(11·61)
Croydon	24·78	(6·84)	49·39	(14·09)
Ealing	24·16	(6·58)	43·96	(12·23)
Enfield	25·87	(7·25)	45·77	(11·13)
Haringey	35·56	(8·64)	57·61	(15·50)
Harrow	22·74	(5·58)	49·27	(12·26)
Havering	26·06	(0·00)	58·36	(0·00)
Hillingdon	23·93	(20·05)	45·27	(36·59)
Hounslow	27·23	(7·17)	41·66	(12·17)
Kingston-upon-Thames	29·11	(7·10)	60·56	(12·13)
Merton	21·57	(0·00)	33·37	(0·00)
Newham	22·79	(7·10)	41·90	(15·24)
Redbridge	24·38	(9·68)	48·57	(15·93)
Richmond-upon-Thames	21·96	(2·33)	55·74	(2·13)
Sutton	26·71	(12·19)	38·41	(10·02)
Waltham Forest	34·19	(8·06)	57·41	(13·21)
ILEA	47·47	(9·06)	90·89	(18·36)
Birmingham	13·76	(3·84)	27·47	(6·40)
Coventry	25·57	(2·14)	53·57	(2·37)
Dudley	21·15	(0·00)	35·65	(0·00)
Sandwell	18·63	(0·00)	42·15	(0·00)
Solihull	18·47	(4·72)	46·20	(9·54)
Walsall	25·28	(4·79)	37·27	(10·00)
Wolverhampton	26·48	(7·41)	43·35	(12·44)
Knowsley	19·37	(4·72)	34·02	(5·71)
Liverpool	25·53	(7·08)	47·51	(11·52)
St. Helens	14·93	(6·24)	22·52	(7·48)
Sefton	20·26	(6·14)	40·11	(11·35)
Wirral	25·18	(7·23)	49·64	(9·89)
Bolton	27·19	(8·60)	51·66	(9·42)
Bury	20·65	(20·47)	52·41	(52·41)
Manchester	23·79	(6·80)	56·48	(12·39)
Oldham	27·43	(3·31)	40·65	(0·51)
Rochdale	22·10	(5·84)	34·82	(6·46)
Salford	27·42	(6·03)	46·59	(9·74)
Stockport	23·66	(7·24)	47·65	(10·84)
Tameside	25·36	(10·18)	40·42	(12·30)
Trafford	22·63	(5·18)	32·41	(1·34)
Wigan	22·35	(6·42)	45·36	(12·13)
Barnsley	23·00	(8·19)	42·67	(7·65)
Doncaster	16·86	(5·06)	35·78	(9·37)
Rotherham	15·72	(5·35)	26·70	(6·22)

Local authority	Nursery and primary schools		Secondary schools	
	Books and equipment	(of which books)	Books and equipment	(of which books)
Sheffield	36·01	(14·42)	36·55	(6·60)
Bradford	18·80	(0·80)	35·99	(1·34)
Calderdale	19·38	(6·30)	34·07	(8·05)
Kirklees	18·57	(7·54)	39·16	(14·03)
Leeds	8·56	(·16)	13·17	(·35)
Wakefield	21·72	(10·21)	30·10	(11·79)
Gateshead	26·14	(7·68)	46·72	(8·76)
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	19·26	(4·92)	38·64	(10·42)
North Tyneside	27·99	(10·03)	50·30	(13·82)
South Tyneside	20·87	(8·07)	54·13	(11·75)
Sunderland	18·81	(5·19)	41·88	(6·92)
Isles of Scilly	27·90	(5·46)	41·29	(10·07)
Avon	24·19	(6·55)	40·67	(8·32)
Bedfordshire	26·00	(10·40)	55·45	(19·11)
Berkshire	23·30	(10·21)	43·67	(16·73)
Buckinghamshire	30·99	(13·60)	50·99	(12·19)
Cambridgeshire	25·34	(9·65)	43·14	(13·22)
Cheshire	22·09	(5·18)	44·89	(6·84)
Cleveland	19·99	(5·22)	38·09	(8·02)
Cornwall	29·97	(9·45)	41·51	(11·63)
Cumbria	21·26	(5·73)	32·88	(4·05)
Derbyshire	28·03	(8·36)	48·37	(11·75)
Devon	13·57	(8·47)	21·57	(9·40)
Dorset	28·63	(9·84)	38·97	(11·79)
Durham	17·22	(7·14)	28·37	(9·45)
East Sussex	21·83	(7·40)	42·78	(12·45)
Essex	21·12	(7·08)	38·21	(8·15)
Gloucestershire	20·62	(9·11)	35·71	(9·24)
Hampshire	19·54	(6·83)	40·92	(10·36)
Hereford and Worcester	22·93	(9·98)	43·50	(12·13)
Hertfordshire	23·31	(9·88)	42·15	(11·74)
Humberside	24·08	(6·71)	40·80	(9·43)
Isle of Wight	26·07	(11·04)	52·57	(12·36)
Kent	20·68	(7·03)	38·74	(9·60)
Lancashire	22·86	(8·04)	37·79	(8·14)
Leicestershire	22·52	(5·92)	41·53	(8·05)
Lincolnshire	18·02	(5·65)	43·05	(9·08)
Norfolk	22·78	(6·54)	40·36	(10·30)
North Yorkshire	24·60	(11·47)	39·45	(11·66)
Northamptonshire	22·39	(6·13)	44·72	(11·58)
Northumberland	26·00	(9·59)	43·31	(14·31)
Nottinghamshire	29·80	(9·44)	44·96	(12·13)
Oxfordshire	21·77	(2·65)	38·28	(3·70)
Salop	15·80	(6·65)	33·80	(9·33)
Somerset	27·22	(5·59)	46·49	(11·93)
Staffordshire	19·56	(4·90)	36·53	(8·63)
Suffolk	25·17	(7·04)	43·29	(11·00)
Surrey	15·11	(4·75)	34·37	(7·60)
Warwickshire	19·24	(7·27)	47·97	(11·63)
West Sussex	23·26	(8·24)	41·89	(10·57)
Wiltshire	23·05	(10·53)	37·34	(11·39)

Table 2
Expenditure per pupil[1]—1988-89
England[2]

Cash (

Local authority	Nursery and primary schools		Secondary schools	
	Books and equipment	(of which books)	Books and equipment	(of which books)
Barking	32·65	(11·50)	80·58	(22·72)
Barnet	35·17	(11·99)	68·96	(17·52)
Bexley	31·98	(7·38)	99·22	(1·92)
Brent	38·42	(9·46)	76·43	(15·27)
Bromley	33·80	(9·02)	67·33	(13·07)
Croydon	54·89	(11·10)	111·98	(22·49)
Ealing	33·86	(5·73)	91·61	(12·63)
Enfield	30·76	(9·16)	61·09	(15·95)
Haringey	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Harrow	39·77	(6·98)	75·72	(10·85)
Havering	30·02	0·00	91·34	0·00
Hillingdon	40·45	(11·99)	80·08	(22·30)
Hounslow	33·40	(9·61)	49·65	(19·84)
Kingston-upon-Thames	55·50	(12·92)	106·58	(18·63)
Merton	31·28	(25·44)	36·02	(26·95)

Local authority	Nursery and primary schools		Secondary schools	
	Books and equipment	(of which books)	Books and equipment	(of which books)
Newham	26·35	(6·44)	65·87	(11·34)
Redbridge	38·84	(11·30)	81·31	(23·65)
Richmond-upon-Thames	29·95	(8·25)	62·88	(13·76)
Sutton	34·64	(13·39)	71·17	(17·01)
Waltham Forest	28·21	(4·91)	75·37	(10·55)
ILEA	60·56	(12·08)	89·89	(19·28)
Birmingham	22·74	(4·70)	51·42	(9·50)
Coventry	26·08	(2·01)	92·00	(2·95)
Dudley	35·72	(6·79)	76·36	(2·44)
Sandwell	31·50	(3·06)	73·42	(1·02)
Solihull	34·88	(4·96)	122·79	(11·28)
Walsall	35·12	(9·10)	46·29	(14·38)
Wolverhampton	24·54	(7·23)	56·08	(13·99)
Knowsley	22·47	(8·88)	61·05	(7·01)
Liverpool	32·61	(7·76)	66·56	(12·13)
St. Helens	14·98	(6·33)	30·36	(10·39)
Sefton	21·41	(7·11)	60·55	(11·12)
Wirral	42·39	(11·92)	130·04	(23·45)
Bolton	33·23	(9·32)	71·24	(21·01)
Bury	30·75	(8·65)	93·06	(15·21)
Manchester	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Oldham	30·45	(7·19)	75·02	(10·58)
Rochdale	35·27	(9·08)	59·17	(10·52)
Salford	32·70	(0·23)	73·65	(0·07)
Stockport	35·87	(10·15)	96·37	(12·13)
Tameside	27·91	(5·74)	43·96	(8·06)
Trafford	37·75	(12·54)	70·39	(11·37)
Wigan	17·87	(5·42)	60·39	(17·03)
Barnsley	22·89	(4·75)	43·23	(2·36)
Doncaster	27·08	(6·67)	55·45	(11·14)
Rotherham	28·87	(6·82)	57·92	(9·04)
Sheffield	12·11	(5·33)	23·46	(7·98)
Bradford	28·71	0·00	71·73	0·00
Calderdale	28·52	(8·99)	63·13	(13·77)
Kirklees	25·17	(7·90)	63·89	(20·93)
Leeds	15·30	(0·43)	28·26	(2·45)
Wakefield	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Gateshead	29·26	(4·89)	75·22	(11·65)
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	30·36	(7·00)	74·85	(17·41)
North Tyneside	25·56	(8·30)	48·48	(12·26)
South Tyneside	27·22	(4·81)	95·85	(9·24)
Sunderland	23·19	(6·15)	76·03	(9·12)
Avon	17·62	(6·01)	48·75	(11·37)
Bedfordshire	28·28	(9·53)	86·88	(23·60)
Berkshire	33·07	(13·88)	75·33	(23·85)
Buckinghamshire	32·59	(15·51)	72·90	(17·13)
Cambridgeshire	42·32	(11·98)	79·84	(21·62)
Cheshire	25·80	(8·86)	56·49	(18·39)
Cleveland	11·84	(7·27)	34·10	(11·16)
Cornwall	37·15	(12·32)	63·84	(21·77)
Cumbria	36·69	(13·11)	58·74	(15·67)
Derbyshire	29·35	(8·50)	74·40	(14·87)
Devon	37·40	(12·12)	65·14	(20·11)
Dorset	38·56	(11·63)	80·62	(13·72)
Durham	28·51	(9·47)	67·70	(16·44)
East Sussex	32·56	(11·04)	77·26	(17·78)
Essex	36·19	(9·69)	81·08	(14·11)
Gloucestershire	29·42	(11·93)	59·02	(19·40)
Hampshire	35·55	(2·28)	78·86	(4·72)
Hereford and Worcester	28·44	(11·13)	57·92	(14·98)
Hertfordshire	40·59	(14·97)	76·11	(20·18)
Humberside	32·68	(8·96)	60·98	(13·00)
Isle of Wight	32·74	(11·92)	54·37	(11·61)
Kent	29·02	(9·00)	71·61	(14·15)
Lancashire	30·13	(9·59)	65·70	(13·22)
Leicestershire	31·59	(11·26)	81·42	(16·36)
Lincolnshire	16·22	(10·94)	29·03	(17·69)
Norfolk	29·63	(8·27)	56·04	(12·29)
North Yorkshire	31·24	(5·95)	68·37	(7·48)
Northamptonshire	33·41	(7·81)	74·41	(18·34)
Northumberland	33·32	(11·07)	72·62	(16·92)
Nottinghamshire	35·60	(11·74)	66·56	(18·25)
Oxfordshire	43·28	(8·01)	103·89	(17·59)
Shropshire	30·94	(10·74)	64·32	(18·54)
Somerset	37·22	(6·64)	90·56	(14·45)
Staffordshire	36·68	(9·92)	77·80	(13·44)

Local authority	Nursery and primary schools		Secondary schools	
	Books and equipment	(of which books)	Books and equipment	(of which books)
Suffolk	29·28	(8·97)	54·73	(14·02)
Surrey	21·48	(5·45)	94·51	(11·93)
Warwickshire	25·68	(8·82)	98·23	(16·12)
West Sussex	34·85	(10·22)	73·25	(16·21)
Wiltshire	40·32	(26·49)	71·08	(32·56)

[1] The figures are based on local education authority expenditure and pupil number returns to the relevant Government Depa
[2] n/a denotes that an expenditure return has not been received from the local education authority, or that a separate figure for bo not been provided.

Table 3
E. Land Averages
Expenditure per pupil

Cash Year	Nursery and primary schools		Secondary schools	
	Books and equipment £	(of which books) £	Books and equipment £	(of which books) £
1978-79	12·88	(4·24)	24·40	(7·17)
1984-85	23·60	(7·25)	42·53	(10·15)
1988-89	32·14	(8·95)	69·79	(14·25)

Real terms at 1978-79 prices Year	Nursery and primary schools		Secondary schools	
	Books and equipment £	(of which books) £	Books and equipment £	(of which books) £
1978-79	12·88	(4·24)	24·40	(7·17)
1984-85	13·24	(4·07)	23·86	(5·69)
1988-89	14·61	(4·07)	31·73	(6·51)

School Budgets

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has any estimate of the financial value of contributions made to school budgets by parents.

Mr. Fallon: My right hon. and learned Friend is not aware of any reliable and up-to-date estimate.

Schools (Charging)

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the progress of the review of the charging regulation under the Education Reform Act 1988.

Mr. Fallon: My right hon. and learned Friend is collecting evidence from a range of sources about the operation of the relevant legislation. The results of a sample survey of schools will be available in January 1991 to supplement information from other interested bodies.

TRANSPORT

Driving Tests

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether his Department proposes to introduce any changes for the disabled *(a)* in driving test requirements and *(b)* in qualifications and requirements for driving instructors; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: I do not at present have any plans to introduce such changes. The Driving Standards Agency is, however, considering possible ways to ensure tha are no unnecessary obstacles to disabled people wh to become driving instructors.

Trains (Accidents)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Tra what information his Department has, and representations it has received, about deaths and i caused as a result of faulty train doors, in British R underground services.

Mr. Freeman: In the five-year period 1985-1989 is no evidence to show that faulty train doors on Rail and underground services were the cause of d major injury. During that time, fatalities and injuri occurred in accidents associated with train doors following reasons:

(a) passengers slipping as they enter or aligh stationary trains.
(b) passengers opening slam-type doors as the trai the station, causing injury to persons on the pl
(c) passengers falling out of trains after delibera accidentally opening a slam door while the tra motion.
(d) incorrect operation of sliding doors.

A number of hon. Members and members of the have made representations about accidents in t category. The railway inspectorate received a le October from a member of Liverpool city concerning recent accidents on the west coast ma involving passengers falling from trains. After accident on this line, BR examined all doors con and found them to be working properly.

[1] 1989 details are provisional.

Jubilee Line

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of Sta Transport what steps are being taken to safegua route of the extension of the Jubilee line to the roya in the London borough of Newham.

Mr. Freeman: The Bill for the Jubilee line ex provides for an underground step-plate junction s Canning Town to allow an extension of the Jubi through the royal docks to be built at a later stage. A of the land required for such an extension is ow either British Rail or the London Docklands develo corporation, no further action is necessary to saf the route.

Bus Services

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Tra if he will make a statement regarding monopo operation situations which have arisen as a re implementation of the Transport Act 1986.

Mr. Freeman: The Transport Act 1985 brought the bus industry fully within the scope of competition legislation, which is the responsibility of the Office of Fair Trading and the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. The Monopolies and Mergers Commission has so far been requested to investigate six cases involving mergers in the bus industry.

Gyroplanes

Miss Hoey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many accidents have occurred involving gyroplanes in the last five years; how many have been investigated by the United Kingdom air accidents investigation branch; what have been the main causes of such accidents; and what arrangements have been made to monitor these aircraft to ensure that reasonable safety standards are observed prior to the marketing of gyroplanes for use by the general public.

Mr. McLoughlin: The statutory responsibility for the safety regulation of United Kingdom civil aviation rests with the Civil Aviation Authority. I am advised by the authority that there have been 16 accidents in the last five years, six of which involved fatalities in which a total of six people have been killed. The six accidents involving fatalities have been the subject of field investigations by the Department of Transport's air accidents investigation branch. Of these six accidents, two have involved mechanical failure, two have been associated with weather conditions prevailing at the time of the flight, and two are attributable to pilot error.

Rail Services

Mr. Gerald Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans London Transport has to improve rail access to south and east London.

Mr. Parkinson: A Bill to extend the Jubilee line through south London to docklands and Stratford is currently before the House. This will do much to improve access to areas of Southwark, Bermondsey, Greenwich, Tower Hamlets and Newham.

I recently announced the go-ahead for east-west crossrail, which will provide Stratford and points east with a direct rail link with west London and the west end as well as the City.

London Transport is extending the docklands light railway to Bank and Beckton.

I am pleased to report that I have authorised London Transport to deposit a Bill for the proposed extension of the docklands light railway to Lewisham. I have done this on the clear understanding that the project will only proceed if LT is successful in its efforts to arrange an acceptable privately financed scheme, and the powers are being taken in that behalf. This extension would provide a further important river crossing and allow the docklands regeneration benefits to spread south from the Isle of Dogs to areas of Greenwich and Lewisham.

London Transport is also spending very large sums modernising the Central line as well as continuing to invest heavily in safety and in the general upgrading of the existing underground system. London Transport's investment programme over the next three years will approach £3 billion, an increase of about 90 per cent. in real terms over the previous three years. With such a large programme already in hand and largely funded by Government grant, further extensions to south and east London could be afforded now only if they were privately funded or London Transport felt able to reorder its priorities.

As it is, although a substantial private sector contribution has been offered towards a station on the proposed east London line extensions, the project as a whole would still require substantial public funding. Given the public expenditure constraints within which it must operate, London Transport has concluded that it has other more pressing priorities at present and has therefore decided, with my agreement, not to seek leave to deposit the necessary Private Bill in this Session of Parliament. I hope nonetheless that London Transport will continue to discuss the project with interested parties in case a way can be found of taking the project forward at less cost to it. We are discussing with London Transport the case for safeguarding the route of the extensions through the planning system so as to ensure that they remain an option for the future.

Learner Drivers

Mr. Ian Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on progress with the production of an official syllabus for learner drivers and riders.

Mr. Chope: I am pleased to announce that the Driving Standards Agency has produced a book containing the syllabus and guide to car and motor cycle tests. The book, called "Your Driving Test", is published today and can be obtained from HMSO and major bookstores. The agency also plans to produce a companion volume about driving tests for large goods and passenger vehicles.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Prisons

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the prisons in England and Wales in which restraints have been used on inmates during the last three years; and how many times restraints have been used at each prison during this period.

Mrs. Rumbold: The number of applications of restraints under rule 46 of the Prison Rules 1964, rule 49 of the Detention Centre Rules 1983, rule 49 of the Youth Custody Centre Rules 1983 and rule 49 of the Young Offender Institution Rules 1988 are given in the table.

Restraints[1] applied to violent or refractory inmates of prison service establishments in England and Wales: by establishment, 1987-89

Establishment and type	*Number of applications*		
	1987	*1988*	*1989*
Local prisons/remand centres			
Ashford	—	—	5
Bedford	4	3	2
Birmingham	—	10	3
Bristol	—	—	1
Brixton	—	—	6
Camp Hill	—	—	5
Canterbury	1	—	—
Cardiff	5	1	2
Chelmsford	—	1	1
Durham	—	1	—
Exeter	2	—	—
Hull	7	4	9
Leeds	1	1	—

Establishment and type	Number of applications 1987	1988	1989
Leicester	5	17	4
Lewes	—	1	4
Lincoln	—	5	4
Oxford	1	1	—
Pentonville	2	1	—
Reading	1	2	2
Risley	—	—	2
Rochester	—	—	2
Swansea	1	—	—
Wandsworth	5	10	7
Wormwood Scrubs	3	2	2
Training prisons			
Acklington	—	—	2
Albany	2	—	20
Blundeston	4	—	—
Camp Hill	2	6	—
Chelmsford	1	—	—
Cookham Wood	—	—	1
Dartmoor	1	—	—
Frankland	6	7	3
Full Sutton	—	7	9
Garth	—	1	—
Havering	—	—	1
Lindholme	1	4	2
Long Lartin	4	3	—
Parkhurst	6	6	9
Preston	—	—	2
Shepton Mallet	—	3	—
Stafford	3	—	1
7Styal	1	—	—
Wakefield	2	—	—
Wayland	—	—	1
Young offender institutions/youth custody centres/detention centres			
Aylesbury	—	1	5
Buckley Hall	—	1	—
Dover	7	—	5
Glen Parva	1	1	—
Guys Marsh	1	—	3
Hatfield	—	1	—
Hollesley Bay	1	—	—
Onley	1	2	—
Rochester	8	—	—
All establishments	90	103	125

[1] Loose canvas jacket, body belt, handcuffs and ankle straps. No leather wrist straps were used.

Firearms

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Northumbria on the number of incidents involving the use of firearms dealt with by Northumbria police in 1990 and the number of officers trained in the use of firearms in the force at the present time.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I understand from the chief constable of Northumbria that between 1 January and 15 November 1990 firearms were issued to his officers in 176 operations against crime. On 15 November, 149 of his officers were trained and authorised to be issued with firearms.

Fresh Start

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list *(a)* the average sickness rates and *(b)* the average long-term sickness rates, namely over one year, for each prison in the United Kingdom for each of the two years before Fresh Start was implemented and the subsequent years.

Mrs. Rumbold: The number of lost days due t absence in prison establishments in England and the year ending March 1990 averaged about 1 officer. I will write to the hon. Member shortl breakdown by establishment. Information on short-term sickness rates and sickness rates in ea is not held centrally and could be obtained disproportionate cost.

Suicides (Police Cells)

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of Sta Home Department how many self-inflicte suicides and attempted suicides took plac prisoners held in police cells in 1988, 1989 an date.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The number of deaths whic in police custody, together with brief deta circumstances surrounding each case, are conta annual reports of Her Majesty's chief ins constabulary and the Commissioner of Poli Metropolis. The number of cases in which the inquest has returned a verdict of suicide is as f

	Number
1988	5
1989	5
1990	[1]1

[1] A number of inquests have yet to be concluded.

Other self-inflicted deaths are not categori ately and no details of attempted suicides are centrally.

Immigration

Mr. Fishburn: To ask the Secretary of Sta Home Department what are the average and the delays suffered by non-EEC passengers at check-ins at Heathrow and Gatwick over th months; and what are the comparable figures passengers.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The average and maximum Heathrow and Gatwick during the six-month April to 30 September 1990 were as follows:

	Non-EEC Minutes
Heathrow	
Average	18
Maximum	175
Gatwick	
Average	14
Maximum	90

Crime Statistics

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary o the Home Department what are the figures of in Dyfed, Wales, for each year since 1970; and make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: The available informa notifiable offences recorded by the polic Dyfed-Powys police area and is published an

1970-73 in "Supplementary Statistics Relating to Crime and Criminal Proceedings"; for 1974-89 in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales"—table 2.4 for 1989 and corresponding tables in issues for earlier years, and for the 12 months to June 1990 in "Home Office Statistical Bulletin" 31/90. Copies of all these publications are available in the Library.

Prison Population

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his Department's projected prison population for 1993, 1995, 1997 and 1999; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The latest projections of the prison population were published in a Home Office statistical bulletin "Updated projections of long term trends in the prison population to 1998"—issue 33/90, dated 24 October 1990—a copy of which is in the Library.

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the sentenced and remand population in England and Wales for the latest date available; and how many prisoners were being held in police cells on the same date.

Mrs. Rumbold: The latest available information is that on 30 September 1990, a total of 9,377 remand, 214 non-criminal and 34,888 sentenced prisoners were held in prison service establishments. A further 1,009 were held in police cells of whom the majority were remand prisoners.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list for each of the years between 1975 and 1990, the proportion of adults imprisoned per 100,000 of the population.

Mrs. Rumbold *[holding answer 12 November 1990]:* The information is given in the table.

Adult prisoners[1] in prison service establishments in England and Wales on 30 June as a proportion per 100,000 of the adult[2] population, 1975-1990

Year	
1975	83·6
1976	87·6
1977	88·7
1978	87·4
1979	87·2
1980	89·5
1981	89·3
1982	88·4
1983	89·3
1984	89·4
1985	95·4
1986	95·5
1987	103·0
1988	103·6
1989	103·9
1990	[3]95·6

[1] Sentenced remand and non-custodial prisoners aged 21 and over including sentenced young offenders re-classified as adults.
[2] Aged 21 and over.
[3] Using projected mid-year national population.

Hong Kong

Mr. Riddick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what direction he has issued to the Governor of Hong Kong under section 1(3) of the British Nationality (Hong Kong) Act 1990, specifying the time scale and number of persons to be recommended for registration under section 1(1) of that Act during the first stage of the selection process.

Mr. Waddington: I have directed the Governor to make the following recommendations during the period beginning 1 December 1990 and ending 1 January 1994:

not more than 32,700 in the general occupational class, of which not more than 400 are to be in respect of applicants in approved occupations;
not more than 6,200 in the disciplined services class; and
not more than 3,850 in the sensitive service class.

However, I have made no direction for this period in relation to the entrepreneurs class and, accordingly, the Governor may make recommendations during that period in respect of all 500 places in that class.

Victim Support Services

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if his Department will review its current restrictions upon the use of its grant funding to victim support in view of the possible closure of local offices and reduction of services; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten *[holding answer 14 November 1990]:* The Home Office grant-in-aid for local victim support schemes in England and Wales—£4·5 million this year—is administered by the funding panel of the national charity Victim Support under criteria which have been agreed with the Home Office and are reviewed annually. The 350 or so local schemes rely largely on voluntary help, but Home Office grant is available to pay for up to two co-ordinators in each scheme or to assist with running costs. There has been no reduction in Home Office grant which will, subject to parliamentary approval, be increased by 20 per cent. to £5·4 million next year. It is open to local schemes faced with loss or reduction of funding from other sources to apply to the funding panel for new or extra grant.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Judges

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Attorney-General what powers the Lord Chancellor has to control public appearances in programmes of political content by judges.

The Attorney-General: The Lord Chancellor's formal powers over the conduct of judges in England and Wales are limited to the power to remove circuit judges for incapacity or misbehaviour. It is, however, a long-standing convention that judges do not become involved in matters of political controversy, and the Lord Chancellor, as head of the judiciary, would advise any judge who sought his opinion that it would not be appropriate to appear in a programme with a political content.

Distress for Rent Notices

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Attorney-General what proposals he has to expand and simplify the prescribed notices given to debtors under the Distress for Rent Rules of 1988.

The Attorney-General: The Law Commission is at present undertaking a study of the law of distress, and a final report is expected early in the new year.

The Lord Chancellor's Department will be carrying out a review of the Distress for Rent Rules 1988 once that report has been received.

Private Bailiffs

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Attorney-General what proposals he has to establish a register of certificated private bailiffs.

The Attorney-General: A register of bailiffs who hold a certificate granted by a county court judge authorising them to levy any distress for rent is maintained by the Lord Chancellor's Department at its London headquarters.

The register is maintained for administrative purposes and is not open to public inspection, but each county court maintains a list of bailiffs who hold a certificate as at 1 February each year. The list is exhibited in the public area at the court office.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Attorney-General what proposals he has for consulting community charge and advice agencies about charges made by private bailiffs.

The Attorney-General: The level of fees, charges and expenses which my be recovered from a tenant by certificated bailiff is set out in appendix 1 to the Distress for Rent Rules 1988 and is reviewed from time to time by the Lord Chancellor's Department, in consultation with other Government Departments and with the Certificated Bailiffs' Association. Charges by private bailiffs for enforcing liability orders—schedule 5 of the Community Charges (Administration and Enforcement) Regulations 1989—are the same. There are no plans at present to extend this consultation process.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Attorney-General what proposals he has to establish a complaints procedure against private bailiffs.

The Attorney-General: Any person who wishes to complain about the conduct or fitness of a bailiff who holds a certificate granted by a county court judge under the Distress for Rent Rules 1988 may make his or her complaint in writing to the county court from which the certificate was issued.

No such procedure is in place in respect of private bailiffs who do not hold a certificate granted by a judge of a county court. Such bailiffs are not authorised to levy distress for rent, but may operate in other areas such as recovery of community charge, fines or taxes.

Bereavement Damages

Mr. Carrington: To ask the Attorney-General whether the Government propose to increase the level of bereavement damages under the Fatal Accidents Act 1976; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: Following a review announced last year, the Government have decided that the statutory level of bereavement damages which may be awarded by the courts in England and Wales in fatal accident cases should be raised from the figure of £3,500 fixed in 1982 to £7,500.

In accordance with the provisions of section 1A of the Fatal Accidents Act 1976, the Lord Chancellor will shortly be making the necessary order, which is subject to the negative resolution procedure, to implement the increase to £7,500 which will take effect in relation occurring on or after 1 April 1991. A separate or made at the same time, under article 3A of Accidents (Northern Ireland) Order 1977, to similar increase in the level of the award in Ireland.

The proposed new level of £7,500 will also a effect from 1 April 1991, to cases where a be award is made under the criminal injuries com scheme in England and Wales.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of Northern Ireland intends to bring forward increasing the level of bereavement award to £7, the statutory criminal injuries compensation sch Province.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Norwich Union

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State and Industry if he has received any representati intervention order by LAUTRO to prevent Union from taking business with the Winchest and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: My right hon. Friend has re such representations. It is up to LAUTRO, and the Securities and Investments Board, to deci enforce the rules.

Thames Water

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Industry if he will meet the chairman of the stock to discuss the failure of Thames Water plc to stockholders the outstanding liability on Me water board 3 per cent. B stock; and if he wi statement.

Mr. Redwood: No. This is a matter for the co stockholders and the stock exchange.

Machine Tool Industry

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State and Industry if he will list the amount export machine tool industry for each year from 197

Mr. Sainsbury: The information is as follow

United Kingdom Exports of Metal Working Machin 1979-1989

Year	*£ million*
1979	291
1980	367
1981	355
1982	353
1983	283
1984	320
1985	372
1986	379
1987	426
1988	524
1989	526

[1] Activity Heading 3221 of the Standard Industrial Cl (Revised 1980).

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Cot Deaths

Sir Dudley Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what progress is being made by his Departmental inquiry into cot deaths; when he expects to receive it; and if he will publish it.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I have been asked to reply. The expert working group is expected to report to the Chief Medical Officer soon. It has always been the intention to publish its findings.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Non-proliferation Regime

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proposals for the development of an extended regional non-proliferation regime under the auspices of the United Nations Security Council have been circulated recently by the Soviet Union.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Soviet Union has circulated various proposals at the UN Security Council. As far as we are aware, no proposal for a regional non-proliferation regime has been made.

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to meet his Soviet counterpart or officials of the Soviet Foreign Affairs and Defence Ministries, to discuss the development of new or extended non-proliferation agreements.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No plans at present.

Nuclear Arms Reductions

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what indications he has received from the Soviet Government that in the next round of the strategic nuclear arms reduction negotiations United Kingdom Polaris and-or Trident ballistic nuclear missile systems will necessarily be included on the agenda.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The conditions for the United Kingdom considering how best to contribute to the arms control process are already well known.

United Nations Day

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if Her Majesty's Government supported any events or facilitated the distribution of any literature to mark United Nations day on 24 October.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: No.

Nuclear Weapons Tests

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what decisions have been taken pursuant to rule 44(4) of the rules of procedure for the amendment conference for states party to the treaty banning nuclear weapon tests in the atmosphere in outer space and under water.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We are not aware of any decisions taken by specialised agencies and intergovernmental organisations pursuant to rule 44(4) of the partial test ban treaty amendment conference.

WALES

Housing

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much money was authorised for district councils in Wales for the purchase of houses from the private sector for letting by local authorities, in 1989-90 and 1990-91; and what the level of authorisation will be for 1991-92.

Mr. Grist: A total of £1 million was made available in both 1989-90 and 1990-91 for district councils to purchase land and houses in areas with a high concentration of second homes. This was in addition to their ability to spend, within available resources, according to their own priorities. Decisions about resources for 1991-92 will be announced very soon.

National Rivers Authority

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will arrange to discuss with the chairman of the National Rivers Authority questions relating to the right of trade unions in the industry in Wales to refer disputes to the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service.

Mr. Grist: No. This is a matter for the National Rivers Authority.

Cardiff Bay Barrage

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what discussions he has had with the chairman of the Cardiff Bay development corporation regarding the cost and length of time required for carrying out the additional work specified by his independent groundwater consultant Mr. Roy Stoner.

Sir Wyn Roberts: None. Much of the additional work recommended by Mr. Stoner is already being carried out by the corporation's consultants. The remainder will be undertaken as part of the further studies and should not, therefore, result in an extension to the 12-month period as laid down by the Committee which examined the Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill. Any extra costs involved will be met by the corporation.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what reply he expects to make to the report of Mr. Roy Stoner, placed in the Library on 12 November, relating to the Cardiff bay barrage.

Sir Wyn Roberts: My right hon. Friend has thanked Mr. Stoner for his report and informed him that the issues raised in it will be taken up with Cardiff Bay development corporation and its consultants.

Nature Conservation

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list those sites which (i) have been designated or (ii) meet the criteria for designation as *(a)* special protection areas under the European Community directive on the conservation of wild birds, or *(b)* Ramsar sites under the convention on wetlands of international importance.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The designation of SPA and Ramsar sites is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. Welsh sites are designated in consultation with me.

In Wales three SPAs, Skokholm and Skomer—part—Dee estuary and Grassholm, and two Ramsar sites, Dee estuary and Cors Fochno, have been designated.

I understand that the NCC has so far identified 11 sites, in Wales, which it considers meet the SPA criteria and 10 which meet the Ramsar conditions. These are:

Llyn Idwal (Gwynedd) Ramsar
Llyn Tegid (Gwynedd) Ramsar
Cors Caron (Dyfed) Ramsar
Corsydd Mon/Lleyn (Dyfed) Ramsar
Crumlin Bog (Gwent) Ramsar
Migneint (Gwynedd) Ramsar
Midland Meres Mires (Clwyd) Ramsar
Burry Inlet (Dyfed/West Glamorgan) Ramsar and SPA
Severn Estuary (part) (South Glamorgan/Gwent) Ramsar and SPA
Carmarthen Bay (Dyfed/West Glamorgan) Ramsar and SPA
Skokholm and Skomer (part) (Dyfed) SPA
Glannau Aberdaron/Ynys Enlli (Gwynedd) SPA
Ynys Feurig, Cemlyn Bay and the Skerries (Gwynedd) SPA
Glannau Ynys Gybi (Gwynedd) SPA
Traeth Lafan (Gwynedd) SPA
Pembrokeshire Cliffs (Dyfed) SPA
Elenydd Mallaen (Powys) SPA
Berwyn (Gwynedd) SPA

Agriculture

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he last met representatives from the Farmers Union of Wales to discuss opportunities for young people entering the agriculture industry in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: My right hon. Friend met representatives of the Farmers Union of Wales on 11 September to discuss a range of agricultural issues, which included the opportunities for young people entering the industry.

Music Teaching

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the implications for peripatetic music teaching of local management of schools.

Sir Wyn Roberts: We are not aware that music provision, including the peripatetic music service, has been adversely affected by the introduction of local management of schools. Parents will want to see music provision maintained in the schools their children attend, and so will governors. We confidently expect that the delegation of control to governors will lead to an enrichment in the education experience provided by schools.

Mr. Rod Richards

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, further to his reply of 13 November, *Official Report*, column *106*, if he will give specific details of the knowledge and experience of Mr. Rod Richards in respect of the public sector which will be relevant to his work as special adviser.

Sir Wyn Roberts: My right hon. Friend has nothing to add to the answer he gave the hon. Gentleman on 13 November.

HEALTH

Civil Defence

Mr. Bill Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many civil servants are currently employed *(a)* full time and *(b)* part time by his Department on civil defence; what the total costs of employing staff on civil defence duties were in 1989-90; what they are employing staff on civil defence duties are estimated to be in 1990-91; and whether he has any plans for staff to be transferred to work on other duties.

Mr. Dorrell: The information requested is as follows:

Number of Staff and cost	
Number of Staff employed full-time on 19 Nov 1990	[1]
Number of staff employed part-time on 19 Nov 1990	[1]
Total cost 1989-90	£1.2 million
Estimated total cost 1990-91	£1.2 million

[1] Approximate

My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State announced on 16 October that he had initiated a review of the options for the future of civil defence in the light of east-west relations. Future expenditure in civil defence will depend on the outcome of that review.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Injury and Disablement

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will provide statistics indicating the number of injuries for which injury and disablement benefit was made for 1986, 1987, 1988 and 1989.

Mr. Scott: The table gives statistics of the relationship between industrial accidents and prescribed industrial diseases.

Disablement Pensions in Payment—I

Date	*Industrial Accidents*
30 September 1986	147,000
4 April 1987	148,000
2 April 1988	151,000
1 April 1989	150,000

Notes:
(i) Injury benefit was abolished in 1983.
(ii) The DSS industrial accident statistics cover injuries for which disablement benefit is paid in
(iii) There are some 59 prescribed occupation

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Mrs. Gillian Shephard: None of the staff in the Department is employed full time on civil

There are 10 members of staff in the Department's headquarters and regional offices whose duties include civil defence matters but, since these represent only a very small part of the duties of the staff involved, it is not possible to identify separately the costs involved.

Workplace Accidents

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the reported accidents involving lifting of patients taken from B176 forms received by his Department for each year from 1983 to 1989 showing distribution by age/sex, occupation, incidence rates based on population of England and place of accident.

Mr. Scott: The information requested is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Retirement Pension

Sir Ian Gilmour: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people put in claims for retirement pension during the six months to March 1989; how many were awarded the full basic rate retirement pension; and what are the reasons for the proportion not receiving full basic rate pension.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: In the six months to March 1989 317,011 claims were made to state retirement pension and 244,940 awards of basic pension made. The difference between these figures is made up by those claims from individuals choosing to defer their pensions, those which led to the payment of graduated and additional pension only and cases where there was no entitlement to retirement pension.

Of the awards made, 194,600 were at the full rate of basic retirement pension. These pensions are based upon a person's, or their spouse's, contribution record; the main reason for an award being made at less than the full rate is an insufficient record, but it can also reflect a reduction due to receipt of another benefit.

Benefits

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people are in receipt of attendance allowance, mobility allowance and invalid care allowance in *(a)* the Kirklees district and *(b)* England and Wales.

Mr. Scott: The numbers of people receiving each benefit in Kirklees district could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. The latest available information about people receiving these benefits in England and Wales is in the table:

	Number
Attendance Allowance *(as at 31 March 1989)*	[1]695,000
Mobility Allowance *(as at 15 November 1990)*	539,000
Invalid Care Allowance (Scotland, England and Wales)[2] *(as at 31 October 1990)*	132,000

[1] Statistical estimate.
[2] Separate figures for England and Wales are not available.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will provide details for the Kirklees metropolitan district of the number of people curren most recent figures, in receipt of each of the follow benefits: *(a)* attendance allowance, *(b)* mobi allowance and *(c)* invalid care allowance, and an estim of what level of take-up the above figures represen terms of entitlement to benefit for the Kirklees distric

Mr. Scott: This information is not available and co be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State Social Security if he will list all forms of benefit that can obtained through his Department; when each form benefit was first introduced; and whether each form benefit was introduced as an entirely new benefit whether it superseded earlier benefit payments.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 15 Novem 1990]:* The information requested is in the table. The da given are those of introduction of the benefit in its origi form and it should be noted that many have since b modified.

Benefit	*Introduced*	*Superseded*
Attendance Allowance	December 71	New
Child Benefit	April 77	Family Allowance
Christmas Bonus	December 72	New
Community Charge Benefit[1]	April 90	Rate Rebate (Engla and Wales) Community Char Rebate (Scotland)
Constant Attendance Allowance	July 48	New
Exceptionally Severe Disablement Allowance	July 48	New
Family Credit	April 88	Family Income Supplement
Guardians Allowance	July 48	Orphan's Pension
Housing Benefit—[1] Rent Rebates	November 82— April 83	Local Authorities h schemes and supplementary benefit provision
Rent Allowance	as above	as above
Income Support	April 88	Supplementary Ben
Industrial Death Benefit[2]	July 48	New
Industrial Disablement Benefit	July 48	New
Invalid Care Allowance	July 76	New
Invalidity Benefit	September 71	New
Maternity Allowance[3]	July 48	New
Mobility Allowance	January 76	New
One Parent Benefit[4]	April 77	Child Interim Benef
Pneumoconiosis, byssinosis and miscellaneous diseases benefit[5]	March 52	New
Reduced Earnings Allowance	October 86	Special Hardship Allowance
Remission of certain NHS charges and payment of travelling expenses to hospital for NHS treatment on income grounds[6]	April 88	Replaced a similar scheme but with changes in the bas of assessment and with centralised administration
Retirement Allowance	April 88	Reduced Earnings Allowance for tho of pension age wh retired
Retirement Pension—		
Category A and B	July 48	New
Category C	July 70	New
Category D	July 71	New
Age addition	July 71	New
Graduated retirement benefit[7]	July 61	New

Benefit	*Introduced*	*Superseded*
Additional pension (SERPS), payable also with widow's benefits (except Widow's Payment)	April 79	New
Severe Disablement Allowance	November 84	Non Contributory Invalidity Pension (NCIP)
Sickness Benefit[3]	July 48	New
Social Fund—		
Funeral Payments	April 87	Supplementary Benefit Single Payment
Maternity Payments	April 87	as above
Community Care Grants	April 88	New
Budgeting Loans	April 88	Supplementary Benefit Single Payments
Crisis Loans	April 88	Supplementary Benefit Urgent payments
Cold Weather Payments	November 88	Exceptionally Severe Weather Payments
Travel Grants, Settlement or Resettlement Loans	September 90	New
Statutory Maternity Pay [8]	April 87	Maternity allowance for most employed women.
Statutory Sick Pay [8]	April 83	Sickness benefit for most employed people
Unemployment Benefit[9]	1911	New
Vaccine damage payments [10]	March 79	New
War Disablement Pension	February 17	New
War Widow's Pension	February 17	New
Widow's Pension	July 48	New
Widow's Payment	April 88	Widow's allowance
Widowed Mother's Allowance	July 48	New
Workmen's Compensation Supplement	July 51	New

Notes:

[1] Paid and administered by local authorities on behalf of the Department of Social Security (DSS).

[2] Not payable in respect of deaths on or after 11 April 1988.

[3] Superseded benefits payable under the various National Health Insurance Acts.

[4] Named Child Benefit Increase prior to 1 April 1981.

[5] Miscellaneous diseases first included in November 1954.

[6] Administered by DSS on behalf of the Department of Health.

[7] Payable only to people with accrued rights derived from payments to the graduated pension scheme from 1961 to 1975.

[8] Statutory Sick Pay and Statutory Maternity Allowance are administered and paid by employers. Sickness benefit and Maternity Allowance are still available for those who do not qualify.

[9] Paid and administered by the Department of Employment.

[10] Paid via the Department of Health until 1982 when responsibility passed to DSS.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what advice has been given to the Government of the Irish Republic about their handling of the outbreak of bovine spongiform encephalopathy in the Republic.

Mr. Maclean: We have kept the Government of the Irish Republic fully informed about the measures we have taken to deal with bovine spongiform encephalopathy in the United Kingdom and of the reasons for taking them.

Mr. Hind: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he expects the Government to respond to the Agriculture Committee's report on bovine spongiform encephalopathy.

Mr. Maclean: I and my right hon. Friends have today presented to Parliament the Government's response to the House of Commons Agriculture Committee's report on bovine spongiform encephalopathy. Copies of the response have been deposited in the Library of the House and are available from the Vote Office.

Seaside Rock

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what investigations have been made into the side-effects of the red-pink colouring E127, known as erythrosine, used in seaside rock; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: E127, erythrosine, has been investigated by the Food Advisory Committee and the committee on toxicity as part of a review of the use of all colours currently permitted in food. The review showed that the normal consumption of seaside rock coloured with erythrosine does not present a toxicological hazard. However, I have accepted the Food Advisory Committee's advice that there is a need to reduce the level of colours generally in the diet and will be proposing new regulations that will include restrictions on the use of erythrosine as advised by the committee.

EC Special Committee on Agriculture

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish the agenda of each meeting of the special committee on agriculture of the European Community.

Mr. Gummer: It has been the practice of successive Governments not to publish details of the work of official committees reporting to the Council of Ministers.

Fisheries Council

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the outcome of the Fisheries Council held in Brussels on 20 November.

Mr. Curry: I represented the United Kingdom at the Council of Fisheries Ministers in Brussels on 20 November with my noble Friend Lord Strathclyde, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland.

We secured the maintenance of the dual system for herring and price adjustments which should assist the continued orderly marketing of the Scottish herring catch. We kept other price changes within reasonable bounds.

Despite long discussion, the Council was unable to agree on new technical conservation measures. We emphasised the need for early decisions, but the Council concluded that further work was required. We shall continue to press hard for progress on this.

The Council also considered amendments to the fisheries structure regulation discussing the balance of the various measures proposed and remitted the proposal for further consideration at official level.

The Council also agreed that the Commission should press ahead with work to harmonise member states' laws in the Mediterranean and to develop improved research arrangements, as a first step in developing a common fisheries policy in the Mediterranean.

Tecnazene

Mr. Quin: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proportion of the 1989 United Kingdom potato crop was treated with tecnazene.

Mr. Maclean: No survey was conducted in 1989. The latest figures for use of tecnazene are: in England and Wales 35 per cent. of the 1988 crop; in Scotland 24 per cent. of the 1986 crop.

Birds

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he has any scientific evidence that the bird species subject to the proposed alteration to the Wildlife and Countryside Act cause damage to growing crops, game birds or livestock feedingstuffs.

Mr. Maclean: This Department's central science laboratories have researched damage to agricultural crops caused by starlings, wood pigeons and Brent geese. This damage is significant: starlings can take 12 per cent. of barley for cattle and 20 per cent. of the cherry crop, wood pigeons eat oil seed rape worth £2 million, and Brent geese reduce yield of winter wheat locally by up to 10 per cent.

DEFENCE

United States Nuclear Laboratories

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if any officials of his Department have visited the United States nuclear laboratories at *(a)* Los Alamos, *(b)* Lawrence Livermore or *(c)* Sandia in the current year.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: In the current year Ministry of Defence officials have visited all three of these laboratories under the terms of the 1958 United States-United Kingdom agreement for co-operation on the uses of atomic energy for mutual defence purposes.

Military Nuclear Facilities

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has any plans to seek agreements with the Soviet Union to conclude a bilateral arrangement on environmental restoration and nuclear waste management at military nuclear facilities along the lines of the co-operation agreement between the Soviet Union and the United States of America signed on 18 September.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We have no such plans.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Rural Development

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when the interdepartmental committee on rural development will complete its deliberations and report to him on its findings; and if he will make such findings and recommendations available for public debate and implementation.

Mr. Brooke: The interdepartmental committee on rural development is preparing to report to me before the end of the year. I do not intend to publish the report, although decisions flowing from it will be announced as appropriate.

Housing Executive

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the total number of applications for *(a)* improvement grants and *(b)* repair grants refused by each grants office of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive in each year since 1985.

Dr. Mawhinney: The matter the hon. Gentleman raised is for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, but I understand from the chairman that information on the refusal of individual grant types is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the total number and value of *(a)* improvement grants and *(b)* repair grants issued by each grants office of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive in each year since 1985.

Dr. Mawhinney: This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, whose chairman has advised me that the available information is as follows:

Repair Grants
Number and value (in brackets) £ million

Grants office	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*
Belfast	4,649 (£10·0)	4,301 (£8·7)	2,120 (£7·3)	2,768 (£4·8)	1,881 (£4·2)
Ballyclare	1,495 (£2·4)	1,023 (£1·7)	380 (£0·9)	595 (£1·1)	456 (£1·0)
Ballymena	598 (£1·3)	389 (£1·0)	182 (£0·6)	270 (£0·6)	131 (£0·4)
Coleraine	562 (£1·1)	444 (£0·9)	197 (£0·5)	259 (£0·5)	176 (£0·4)
Craigavon	1,063 (£1·9)	660 (£1·1)	338 (£0·7)	369 (£0·5)	265 (£0·5)
Fermanagh	340 (£0·7)	272 (£0·6)	148 (£0·4)	201 (£0·4)	200 (£0·4)
Lisburn	861 (£2·8)	733 (£1·4)	329 (£1·1)	438 (£0·9)	267 (£0·6)
Londonderry	598 (£1·2)	444 (£0·9)	208 (£0·6)	248 (£0·5)	211 (£0·6)
Newry	448 (£1·2)	326 (£0·8)	214 (£0·7)	215 (£0·5)	137 (£1·7)
Newtownards	2,072 (£2·2)	1,743 (£3·3)	708 (£2·0)	661 (£1·8)	493 (£1·6)
Omagh	388 (£1·1)	287 (£0·6)	177 (£0·5)	243 (£0·6)	222 (£0·6)

Improvement Grants
Number and value (in brackets) £ million

Grants office	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*
Belfast	1,166 (£7·8)	1,027 (£8·0)	778 (£7·9)	893 (£6·1)	690 (£5·7)
Ballyclare	210 (£1·4)	237 (£1·6)	202 (£1·3)	174 (£1·2)	141 (£1·0)
Ballymena	559 (£3·3)	486 (£3·1)	332 (£2·1)	263 (£1·9)	280 (£1·7)
Coleraine	387 (£2·6)	404 (£2·6)	293 (£2·0)	282 (£1·6)	234 (£1·7)
Craigavon	472 (£2·7)	338 (£2·7)	393 (£3·1)	201 (£2·4)	197 (£1·5)
Fermanagh	287 (£2·1)	296 (£2·0)	267 (£1·8)	201 (£1·4)	197 (£1·3)
Lisburn	342 (£2·3)	293 (£2·0)	295 (£1·2)	267 (£1·4)	188 (£1·5)
Londonderry	339 (£1·4)	410 (£3·0)	313 (£2·1)	242 (£1·6)	238 (£1·5)
Newry	369 (£3·0)	403 (£3·2)	420 (£2·4)	267 (£1·8)	225 (£2·2)
Newtownards	338 (£1·7)	366 (£2·2)	246 (£2·4)	266 (£1·6)	186 (£1·7)
Omagh	486 (£4·2)	558 (£4·2)	434 (£3·0)	411 (£2·6)	331 (£2·6)

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the average length of time for the execution of repairs under each repair category identified by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.

Dr. Mawhinney: This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, whose chairman has advised me that the information requested is not readily available and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the number of families or individuals currently registered as homeless with each district office of the maintenance section of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.

Dr. Mawhinney: This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, whose chairman has advised me that the executive does not maintain a register of homeless persons. However, at 19 November 1990, the number of households living in temporary accommodation, secured for them under the homelessness provisions of the Housing (Northern Ireland) Order 1988, by each district office and the housing advice centre of the Housing Executive, is as follows:

	Number of households
Housing Advice Centre	14
DISTRICT	
Belfast 1	30
Belfast 2	8
Belfast 3	34
Belfast 4	9
Belfast 5	6
Belfast 6	14
Belfast 7	21
Bangor	10
Newtownards 1	3
Newtownards 2	3
Castlereagh 1	3
Castlereagh 2	1
Lisburn 1	26
Lisburn 2	0
Lisburn 3	7
Downpatrick	26
Banbridge	2
Newry 1	2
Newry 2	2
Kilkeel	0
Armagh	0
Craigavon	2
Lurgan	0
Portadown	0
Ballymena	5
Antrim	0
Newtownabbey 1	1
Newtownabbey 2	3
Carrickfergus	1
Larne	4
Ballycastle	0
Ballymoney	1
Londonderry 1	16
Londonderry 2	3
Londonderry 3	5
Limavady	7
Coleraine	1
Magherafelt	3
Strabane	0
Omagh	3
Cookstown	0
Dungannon	1
Enniskillen	2

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the number of new-build houses programmed for the current financial year by each district office of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.

Dr. Mawhinney: This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, whose chairman has advised me that programme information is not available in the form requested. It is however available by district council area and the position for the 1990-91 financial year is as follows:

District council	*Number of houses*
Antrim	25
Armagh	34
Belfast	408
Castlereagh	10
Coleraine	3
Craigavon	52
Derry	90
Down	24
Fermanagh	12
Lisburn	222
Magherafelt	9
Newry and Mourne	4
Newtownards	98
Omagh	11
Total	1,002

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the number of families or individuals currently listed in the Northern Ireland Housing Executive's waiting lists in each district office in each category A1, A2, A3, A4, B1, B2 and B3.

Dr. Mawhinney: This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, whose chairman has advised me that the latest available information is as follows:

Northern Ireland housing executive
Total number on waiting list as at 31 October 1990

District	*A1*	*A2*	*A3*	*A4*	*B1*	*B2*	*B3*
Belfast 1	101	27	23	—	509	38	—
Belfast 2	26	88	55	—	548	307	6
Belfast 3	90	32	240	—	416	37	4
Belfast 4	35	40	160	—	427	102	1
Belfast 5	39	54	121	—	329	113	—
Belfast 6	42	39	25	—	372	96	—
Belfast 7	90	58	71	6	597	315	7
Bangor	23	67	9	1	527	407	3
Newtownards 1	44	32	22	1	353	143	3
Newtownards 2	16	12	7	1	169	83	—
Dundonald	20	17	2	2	211	67	1
Newtownbreda	16	33	4	1	264	196	3
Lisburn 1	86	41	10	1	366	126	7
Lisburn 2	30	11	6	2	151	77	1
Lisburn 3	42	6	4	—	358	16	—
Downpatrick	46	27	36	—	441	114	1
Banbridge	32	17	15	2	227	47	—
Newry 1	18	16	7	—	326	67	—
Newry 2	18	18	15	1	224	42	—
Kilkeel	7	7	—	2	87	14	—
Armagh	14	10	22	3	336	79	—
Craigavon	9	1	1	1	192	9	—
Lurgan	13	20	12	1	293	69	1
Portadown	14	10	9	—	230	80	—
Ballymena	24	55	26	3	458	69	—
Antrim	20	19	12	10	492	41	—
Newtownabbey 1	20	18	3	1	240	61	—
Newtownabbey 2	32	23	14	1	381	121	1
Carrickfergus	20	24	4	1	348	113	—
Larne	19	29	26	2	324	61	—
Ballycastle	11	7	1	2	143	15	—
Ballymoney	11	9	9	—	199	26	—
Londonderry 1	107	61	20	3	389	43	1
Londonderry 2	27	54	10	1	230	47	—
Londonderry 3	56	16	—	1	284	12	—
Limavady	15	19	4	3	242	22	—
Coleraine	14	36	13	7	561	98	2
Magherafelt	14	23	18	2	255	52	—
Strabane	19	33	18	1	265	40	—
Omagh	35	13	12	6	342	80	—
Cookstown	11	5	4	3	134	37	—
Dungannon	18	9	6	3	257	73	1
Fermanagh	30	6	42	2	310	102	—

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the total number of dwellings owned by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive in each year since 1985.

Dr. Mawhinney: This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, whose chairman has advised me that the information at 31 March in each year is as follows:

	Number
1985	183,439
1986	181,717
1987	179,910
1988	176,832
1989	174,018
1990	169,971

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many tenants bought their dwellings from the Northern Ireland Housing Executive in each district in each year since 1985.

Dr. Mawhinney: This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, whose chairman has advised me that the information is not available in the precise form requested. However, figures are available for the total number of dwellings sold by the executive in each district since 1985. These comprise mainly sales to tenants, but also include a number of vacant properties sold to non-tenants in areas where housing need has been met, sales under the executive's homesteading scheme and sales to housing associations. The figures are as follows:

Housing Executive properties sold since 1985-86
South Region

District	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*Total*
Armagh	125	104	85	82	163	559
Banbridge	56	51	56	60	113	336
Craigavon	56	28	20	51	42	197
Kilkeel	55	47	29	31	34	196
Lurgan	129	87	50	55	117	438
Newry 1	138	102	135	156	203	734
Newry 2	149	131	108	107	169	664

District	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90	Total
Portadown	88	50	29	50	86	303
REGION TOTAL	796	600	512	592	927	3,427

Belfast Region

District	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90	Total
Belfast 1	281	100	113	134	186	751
Belfast 2	73	68	67	53	89	350
Belfast 3	47	44	60	70	57	278
Belfast 4	32	57	75	45	40	249
Belfast 5	105	60	51	21	56	293
Belfast 6	48	51	32	21	37	189
Belfast 7	43	77	65	62	73	320
REGION TOTAL	566	457	463	406	538	2,430

North East Region

District	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90	Total
Antrim	195	188	116	136	188	823
Ballymena	178	113	54	142	165	652
Carrickfergus	132	161	104	102	200	699
Larne	87	91	81	133	103	495
Newtownabbey 1	125	97	82	98	112	514
Newtownabbey 2	152	121	87	105	114	579
Ballymoney	77	60	39	70	63	309
Ballycastle	29	34	28	34	45	170
REGION TOTAL	975	865	591	820	990	4,241

North-West Region

District	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90	Total
Londonderry 1	64	32	37	32	83	248
Londonderry 2	47	35	44	70	73	269
Londonderry 3	46	27	29	30	53	185
Limavady	104	52	60	59	71	346
Strabane	69	60	78	99	126	432
Coleraine	93	43	40	79	110	365
Magherafelt	93	52	49	74	137	405
REGION TOTAL	516	301	337	443	653	2,250

West Region

District	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90	Total
Omagh	82	53	52	91	100	378
Dungannon	116	75	96	143	176	606
Enniskillen	94	81	78	144	192	589
Cookstown	62	44	46	61	82	295
REGION TOTAL	354	253	272	439	550	1,868

South-East Region

District	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90	Total
Lisburn 3	19	16	18	18	27	98
Lisburn 1	155	81	70	80	120	506
Lisburn 2	97	52	48	79	110	386
Bangor	108	83	92	83	150	516
Castlereagh 1	94	73	56	46	84	353
Castlereagh 2	105	94	63	98	109	469
Downpatrick	136	117	110	124	149	636
Newtownards 1	131	119	104	71	147	572
Newtownards 2	80	73	71	69	84	377
REGION TOTAL	925	708	632	668	980	3,913

Housing Associations

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give details of the financial support given to housing associations in Northern Ireland for the provision of new dwellings.

Dr. Mawhinney: Information on capital funding to housing associations in Northern Ireland is not available on a basis which distinguishes between new build and rehabilitation. However, it is estimated that in 1989-90 expenditure by housing associations on new build for rent was some £19 million out of a total of over £29 million.

Civil Servants

Mr. Grylls: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many civil servants from the Republic of Ireland are currently working in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Cope: Civil servants from the Republic of Ireland are employed on the Irish side of the Anglo-Irish secretariat. The number of civil servants so employed is a matter for the Irish Government.

ENVIRONMENT

Community Charge (Hostages)

Mr. Hayward: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what guidance he has given to local authorities in relation to the community charge where a member of the family is a hostage in Iraq or Kuwait.

Mr. Portillo: The circumstances of British citizens held in the Gulf against their will can affect their liability to one of the community charges in a number of ways. To help local authorities reach consistent treatment my Department's advice is:

> Those who are normally resident in Kuwait or Iraq and are not registered for a personal community charge will obviously, continue without liability.
>
> Those who are normally resident in Britain but now detained in the Gulf should be removed from the register and have no liability for personal charge from the date of their detention if that detention lasts for more than six months.
>
> Those whose sole or main residence in Britain becomes unoccupied for more than six months due to their detention should not become liable to a standard community charge.

Some of this advice was included in a circular issued by my Department to all charging authorities on 5 November. The circular also gave guidance on the treatment of armed forces serving abroad. A copy has been placed in the Library of the House.

Anti-competitive Behaviour

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 12 November, *Official Report*, columns *42-43*, whether his Department investigates all complaints of alleged anti-competitive behaviour which it receives; and if he will indicate the stages of investigation his officials pursue when responding to allegations of anti-competitive behaviour.

Mr. Portillo: My Department investigates all complaints which appear to reveal breaches of the requirements of part I of the Local Government Act 1988. In all cases where a case is being investigated, my Department writes to the authority concerned and considers its reply. Subsequent handling of the investigation depends on the circumstances of each case.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what channels direct services organisations and direct labour organisations have open to them to allege anti-competitive behaviour on the part of local authorities; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what channels private citizens have open to them to allege anti-competitive behaviour on the part of local authorities; and if he will make a statement;

(3) pursuant to his answer of 12 November, *Official Report*, column *43*, if he will publish his Department's guidelines or procedures for complaining of alleged anti-competitive behaviour on the part of local authorities under the Local Government Act 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: A direct services organisation or direct labour organisation would not have an identity separate from its parent authority. It is, however, open to any organisation or individual to write to my Department if they believe that a local authority has failed to comply with the requirements of part I of the Local Government Act 1988. Those include the requirement, contained in section 7(7) of the Act, that an authority, in reaching the decision that they should carry out work subject to the requirements of the Act and in doing anything else in connection with such work before reaching such a decision, should not act in a manner having the effect or intended or likely to have the effect of restricting, distorting or preventing competition.

It would also be open to an organisation or an individual to take civil action if they believed that a local authority had contravened the provisions of the legislation.

The way in which organisations or individuals may raise matters with my Department is not the subject of any special guidelines or procedures.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many complaints his Department has received alleging anti-competitive behaviour on the part of local authorities under the terms of the Local Government Act 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: The Department is currently investigating complaints of alleged anti-competitive behaviour under part I of the Local Government Act 1988 in the case of 48 local authorities. The number of complaints is greater, since some individual authorities are the subject of several complaints. The Department has notified all 48 local authorities of its investigations.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many members of staff in his Department process and monitor complaints of alleged anti-competitive behaviour on the part of local authorities under the terms of the Local Government Act 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: My Department's concern with the implementation of part I of the Local Government Act 1988 goes wider than processing and maintaining complaints of alleged anti-competitive behaviour, and includes a range of other important aspects, such as

responding to queries from local authorities and considering the annual reports which local authorities are required to submit under section 11 of the 1988 Act. Six departmental officials are employed full time on all aspects of the implementation of the 1988 Act. In addition, five other departmental officials are employed on this work for a significant proportion of their time.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many complaints of alleged anti-competitive behaviour, under the terms of the Local Government Act 1988, his Department is currently investigating; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: This question could be answered only at disproportionate expense, since it would require information to be compiled covering a period of at least two years.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether his Department keeps a record of complaints received alleging anti-competitive behaviour on the part of local authorities, under the terms of the Local Government Act 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: The Department maintains full documentation of those complaints alleging anti-competitive behaviour under part I of the Local Government Act 1988 which it investigates.

Bathing Waters

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, further to his answer of 14 November, *Official Report*, column *164*, on the quality of bathing water, if he will list all the improvement schemes for which additional treatment will be provided.

Mr. Trippier: The improvement schemes referred to in my right hon. Friend's answer of 14 November which will include additional treatment are:

REGION AND SCHEME

Northumbrian
- Newbiggin
- Seaton Carew

Anglian
- West Runton
- Cleethorpes
- Dovercourt

Southern
- Dover
- Folkestone/Sandgate
- Pennington
- Pevensey Bay
- Sandwich/Deal
- Worthing/Portslade

Wessex
- Swanage

South West
- Lyme Regis
- Exmouth
- Teignmouth
- Salcombe
- Plymouth
- Seaton and Downderry
- Penzance
- Trevaunance Cove
- Trevone
- Bude
- Taw/Torridge
- Ilfracombe
- Combe Martin
- Lynmouth
- Torbay (Hopes Nose)
- Torbay (Sharkham Point)
- Dartmouth
- Portwrinkle
- Readymoney Cove
- Mevagissey
- Gorran Haven
- Falmouth
- Perranporth
- Seaton (Devon)

Wales
- Jacksons Bay/Whitmore Bay/Cold Knap
- Aberafan
- Swansea
- Aberystwyth
- Tywyn
- Kinmel Bay/Rhyl

North West
- Fylde Coast
- Seascale
- Allonby
- Silloth/Skinburness

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State Environment if he will list all the beaches that fa mandatory coliform bacteria standards of the EC water directive during the 1990 bathing season.

Mr. Trippier: The list was included in DoE news No. 638 of 14 November 1990.

Sewage Sludge

Mr. David Martin: To ask the Secretary of State Environment what progress has been made with th of the best practical environmental option for the of sewage sludge, which the Government, in their r to the third report of the Environment Cor published in June 1988, asked Her Majesty's insp of pollution to commission.

Mr. Trippier: I have today published the repo Practicable Environmental Option (BPEO) Disposal of Sewage Sludge" produced by the Research Centre for Her Majesty's inspecto pollution. Copies have also been placed in the Lib the House.

The report is in two parts. The first descri methodology for identifying the BPEO for sewag treatment and disposal. The second part consist extensive review of actual sludge treatment and techniques.

I would hope that this report will be of interest to the water industry in relation to sewage sludge but also in a wider context to all those faced with of examining BPEOs.

Archaeology and Planning

Mr. David Martin: To ask the Secretary of State Environment when the guidance on archaeolo planning, issued for consultation in February, published.

Mr. Trippier: My right hon. Friend the Secr State has today issued a planning policy guidance archaeology and planning. We have been most in

by, and grateful for, the thought that has gone into the comments we have received in response to the consultation document issued in February. There have been more than 200 responses, coming from a wide range of representative organisations including developers, local authorities, archaeologists, conservation and amenity bodies and museums, as well as individuals.

We have taken the many comments into account in preparing the final guidance and we believe that we now have a well balance document which clearly sets out the importance of archaeology and how it should be handled in the planning process. It should go a long way to ensuring that the desirability of preserving archaeological remains is fully considered before planning decisions are made.

ENERGY

Electricity Privatisation

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy which copyright lawyers were consulted before authorising payment of a licence fee to MCA Merchandising for the use of the Herman Munster copyright to cover the Frank N. Stein advertising campaign.

Mr. Baldry: The Government consulted Slaughter and May, their legal advisers. Other legal advice sought by WCRS is a matter for that company.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what supplementary fees have been, or are to be paid to WCRS, the advertising agency responsible for the Frank N. Stein advertising campaign for the flotation of the electricity distribution companies, as compensation for its costs in settling the claim for breach of the Herman Munster copyright by the MCA Merchandising subsidiary of Universal Studios, Hollywood, USA.

Mr. Baldry: No supplementary fees have been paid, or are to be paid to WCRS in respect of any aspect of the claim for alleged breach of copyright by MCA Merchandising. A total of £6,000 was paid by the Government as a contribution to the licence fee, which is normal in such circumstances.

Energy Efficiency

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many people are employed in the energy efficiency office to give advice on energy efficiency for domestic hereditaments.

Mr. Baldry: The Energy Efficiency Office provides advice and information to householders through its domestic literature, which is also available through its regional offices. In addition, the EEO's new home energy efficiency scheme will provide grants for insulation and for advice on energy to eligible householders.

South Wales Small Mines Association

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (i) when he anticipates receiving the decision of the competition directorate of the European Commission, regarding the complaint about discriminatory coal purchase pricing brought by the South Wales Small Mines Association;

(2) what is the deadline of the competition directorate of the European Commission to determine the complaint from the South Wales Small Mines Association regarding National Power's alleged discriminatory coal purchase pricing under article 85 of the treaty of Rome.

Mr. Baldry: It is for the competition directorate of the European Commission to reach a decision, and make an announcement, about the complaint made by the South Wales Small Mines Association.

Multiple Share Applications

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what recent representations he has received regarding the funding of further computer runs relating to fuzzy matching techniques for the discovery of multiple share applications for British Gas shares in 1986.

Mr. Wakeham: Investigations into multiple share applications for British Gas shares are continuing.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what will be the cost of the detection of multiple share allocations for the flotation of the electricity distribution companies by *(a)* fuzzy matching and *(b)* other computerised techniques; and how it will be funded.

Mr. Baldry: The precise programme of work in this area has not been decided at this stage. The cost will depend on the scope of the work and also on the number of people applying for shares.

Piper Alpha

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether his Department carried out its own research into the fire and explosion on Piper Alpha on 24 March 1984.

Mr. Wakeham: The Department carried out its own investigation into this dangerous occurrence, making use of all available information.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy why his Department did not seek to institute legal proceedings following the explosion and fire in the gas conservation module on Piper Alpha on 24 March 1984.

Mr. Wakeham: Successful prosecutions require a significant commitment of resources, on the part of the relevant legal authorities as well as the Department. Prosecution is therefore a sanction to be applied with discretion, with regard to the likelihood of successful action and with regard to the value of the prosecution. The Department's approach to these issues was developed in collaboration with the procurator fiscal, who would alone be responsible for any decision to initiate proceedings. The dangerous occurrence on Piper Alpha on 24 March 1984 was ascribed to a design fault, probably attributable to the work of non-United Kingdom resident bodies. Also, prompt corrective action had voluntarily been taken by the operator, Occidental. In all the circumstances, the view was taken that a prosecution would have been uncertain, expensive and of little benefit.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what aspects of safety on Piper Alpha were covered in his Department's inspection of *(a)* February and *(b)* March 1984.

Mr. Wakeham: The inspection of the installation on 21 February 1984 was a standard inspection of the installation, covering the normal range of operational activities. The visit by inspectors on 25 and 26 March 1984 was an investigation of the explosion in the gas compression module on 24 March.

North Sea Installations

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) what were the numbers of fatal accidents on oil platforms and other installations in the North sea in each year since 1978;

(2) how many workers on North sea oil and gas installations were killed and seriously injured, respectively, in each year since 1978;

(3) how many serious accidents, excluding fatal accidents, occurred on North sea oil and gas installations in each year since 1978.

Mr. Wakeham: The number of fatalities and serious accidents—injuries to persons—on or near to offshore installations on the United Kingdom continental shelf reported to my Department from 1978 to 1989 are as follows:

	Fatalities	*Serious Accidents*
1978	4	40
1979	10	43
1980	4	45
1981	6	59
1982	14	39
1983	10	47
1984	13	59
1985	8	103
1986	3	101
1987	6	59
1988	[1]173	[2]85
1989	3	85

[1] 167 relate to Piper Alpha.
[2] Includes 11 of the 61 Piper Alpha survivors.
Source: "Development of the Oil and Gas Resources of the United Kingdom". This is published annually and copies are held in the Library of the House.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) what was the complement of full-time inspectors for North sea safety duties in his Department in each year since 1978; and what was the level of vacancies;

(2) how many professional inspectors are employed by his Department on North sea oil and gas installation inspections; and what was the equivalent figure in each year since 1978;

(3) how many full-time field inspectors are now engaged in offshore installations; and what was the equivalent figure in each year since 1978.

Mr. Wakeham: The number of full-time professional inspectors employed in my Department's safety directorate, together with the complement and the number of vacancies is set out in the table.

Date	*Complement*	*Staff in Post*	*Vacancies*
1980 (June)	28	25	3
1981 (July)	33	31	2
1982 (March)	35	32	3
1985 (October)	33	27	6
1987 (March)	44	36	8
1988 (November)	46	39	7
1989 (October)	46		
1990 (October)	61		

Prior to 1988, figures are available only shown. No part-time inspectors are employ

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of Sta how many installations there are in the Brit the North sea; and what was the equivalent f year since 1978.

Mr. Wakeham: Information on the nur platforms on the United Kingdom continer on mobile drilling activity—rig years—is table:

	Fixed platforms[1]
1978	55
1979	58
1980	60
1981	64
1982	67
1983	74
1984	84
1985	92
1986	110
1987	123
1988	131
1989	141

[1] The number of oil and gas platforms which either drilling, producing or under construction.

Source: "Development of the Oil and Gas Resourc Kingdom". This is published annually and c the Library of the House.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of Sta what was the total spent on the Nort inspectorate of his Department in each yea constant prices.

Mr. Wakeham: This information could only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of Sta how many inspectors are currently directly each of the certifying authorities licensed by North sea oil and gas installations.

Mr. Wakeham: There are six certifyi appointed to carry out surveys and assessme installations in order to certify that they a intended purpose. They currently emplo technical staff on this work.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of Sta (1) how many of the prosecutions mo operations of North sea oil and gas insta from accidents and how many arose inspections;

(2) if he will list the operators of North s installations who have been prosecuted in e 1978;

(3) how many prosecutions of operators oil and gas installations have been made in e 1978; and how many were successful.

Mr. Wakeham: Decisions on prosecutions are taken by the appropriate legal authorities, taking into account reports submitted by my Department.

Details of companies convicted for breaches of health and safety legislation are as follows:

Year and companies convicted	*Number of convictons*
1978	
Union Oil Co. of Great Britain	1
Shell UK Exploration and Production	1
Total	2
1979	
Seagull Offshore Enterprises	1
1980	
Stothert and Pitt Limited	1
1981	
Chevron Petroleum (UK) Limited	1
1982	
Southeastern Drilling Services	1
Bawden Drilling (UK) Limited	1
Dixilyn Field Drilling Venture	1
Halliburton Manufacturing and Services Limited	1
Shell UK Exploration and Production	2
BNOC (Development) Limited	2
Total	8
1983	
Jack Tighe (Offshore) Limited	1
Western Oceanic Inc.	1
Heerema Offshore Contractors	1
Occidental Petroleum (Caledonia) Limited	1
Total	4
1984	
Strathclyde Process Engineering Limited	1
Shell UK Exploration and Production	2
Western Oceanic (UK) Limited	2
Total	5
1985	
BP Oil Development Limited	1
Rigblast Offshore Limited	1
Bawden International Limited	2
Global Marine Drilling Company	1
Wilh Wilhelmsen Enterprises Limited	1
Shell UK Exploration and Production	1
Jack Tighe (Offshore) Limited	1
Total	8
1986	
OTIS Pressure Control Limited	1
1987	
Sonat Offshore Limited	1
1988	
Shell UK Exploration and Production	1
Occidental Petroleum (Caledonia) Limited	1
Santa Fe UK Limited	1
Total	3
1989	
Mobil North Sea Limited	1
Shell UK Exploration and Production	1
Total	2

Information on the number of prosecutions resulti from accidents and from inspections is available only disproportionate cost.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Ene how many prohibitions or improvement notices under Health and Safety at Work etc. Act have been issued si 1978 to operators of North sea oil and gas installatio

Mr. Wakeham: Thirteen prohibition and improvem notices under the Health and Safety at Work etc Act h been served on offshore operators since 1978. inspectors have additional powers under the Mine Workings (Offshore Installations) Act 1971 to prohibit activity or the use of equipment or to requ improvements to be made. These powers have b designed specifically for offshore operations and are u extensively.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Ene when his Department first considered the installation sub-sea emergency shut-off valves on oil and gas pipeli in the North sea.

Mr. Wakeham: Following development of sub- valve technology in the early 1980s, amendments w introduced in 1986 to the Institute of Petroleum pipel safety code on the advice of a committee on which pipelines inspectorate was represented. These amendme recommended that risk assessment should be undertal for new large inventory trunk and interfield pipelines assess the need for sub-sea valves. In August 1988 director of safety wrote to all pipeline operators ask them to re-evaluate immediately the need for sub- isolation systems on all existing pipelines.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Ene what percentage of serious and fatal accidents on No sea oil and gas installations were investigated by Department in each year since 1978.

Mr. Wakeham: It is the policy of my safety director to investigate all fatal accidents on offshore installatio The percentage of serious accidents investigated since 1 can be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Achievements

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Ene if he will list the achievements of his Department si June 1987.

Mr. Wakeham: Legislation has been passed provid for the reorganisation and privatisation of the electri supply industry in England and Wales. Flotation of the regional electricity companies is going ahead according plan and preparations are well advanced for the flotat of the two generating companies in February 1991.

Government policies on taxation and licensing h ensured continued successful exploitation of the Uni Kingdom continental shelf. My Department has f accepted the conclusions and recommendations of L Cullen's inquiry into the Piper Alpha accident. Offshore Supplies Office has continued to suppo United Kingdom offshore supplies industry on the Un Kingdom continental shelf and in international mark

The Energy Efficiency Office has continued to prom energy efficiency. Its programmes have secured recurr annual savings now worth over £500 million per yea

has introduced the best practice programme to advance and spread good practice in energy efficiency, and developed the home energy efficiency scheme to provide grants for insulation measures and advice for low-income households.

My Department has facilitated British Coal's continued restructuring of their business in response to changing market circumstances. In particular the Coal Industry Act 1990 introduced deficiency grant, eliminating British Coal's accumulated group deficit of £6 billion at 31 March 1990 and enabling outstanding borrowings to be reduced by over £4 billion.

In the nuclear field, following the decision to retain nuclear power in public ownership, a new company, Nuclear Electric plc, has been set up to own those reactors previously owned by the CEGB. The restructuring of the Atomic Energy Authority has continued in light of current and future business prospects.

On renewable sources of energy, my Department has published a 10-year forward development strategy as Energy Paper 55, doubled Government expenditure on Research and Development and introduced the first renewables order under the non-fossil fuel obligation of the Electricity Act 1989.

As part of the United Kingdom's contribution to the international discussions on climate change my Department prepared a report which evaluated energy-related greenhouse gas emissions and measures to ameliorate them—Energy Paper 58.

EMPLOYMENT

Earnings

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will publish a table showing the percentage increase in rank order since April 1979 in average weekly earnings in real terms for full-time adult male manual workers, including overtime and excluding absence, in mechanical engineering, motor-vehicle and parts industries, clothing, textiles, footwear, domestic electrical applicances, banking and finance, estate agency and property dealing, building societies, insurance business services, water, gas, telecommunications, petroleum tanker-drivers, underground coal-miners, national health service ancillary staff, national health service maintenance staff, hospital porters, ambulance men, hospital ward orderlies and primary teachers.

Mr. Jackson: Information on the average gross weekly earnings of full-time adult male manual employees is published by agreement, by industry and by occupation in part A of the annual new earnings survey reports for the years in question. Information is not available for manual workers in all the categories specified, nor do all the job descriptions specified precisely match the recognised standard classifications used in the survey. Information on the retail prices index (all items), to convert the figures to 1990 prices, is published for April 1990 in table 6·4 of the latest *Employment Gazette*, and in table 26 of the annual supplement to *Economic Trends* for April of earlier years. Copies of these publications are available in the Library.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will publish a table showing the percentage increase in average weekly earnings in real terms for full-time adult male manual workers in the public sector including overtime and exclu
the years 1970 to 1974, 1974 to 1979, 19
1985 to 1990 together with the correspon
non-manuals in respectively, manufactur
sector and the rest of the economy; and
provide corresponding data for females.

Mr. Jackson: Information on the avera
earnings of full-time adult, manual ar
employees in the public sector is publish
part A of the annual new earnings survey
from 1979 onwards, and in a special
December 1977 *Employment Gazette* for e
categories "manufacturing", "public secto
the economy" are not mutually exclusive
data for them are thus not directly compa
information for manual and non-manua
manufacturing and non-manufacturing,
published in table 4 of part A of the NES
years in question, with the exceptio
non-manufacturing in 1990 which are as

	A
Manuals	
Non-manuals	

Information on the retail prices inde
convert the figures to 1990 prices, is pub
1990 in table 6.4 of the *Employment Gaze*
26 of the annual supplement to *Economic*
of earlier years. Copies of the publications
the Library.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secret
Employment whether he will publish a ta
industries on a three-digit basis in which
real average weekly earnings since 1979 h
than half and *(b)* more than half the increa
economy with his best estimate of the in
per head in each case over that period.

Mr. Jackson: The available informat
gross weekly earnings at 3 digit stan
classification (SIC) level is published in p
earnings survey reports for the year
Information on the retail prices index (all i
the figures to 1990 prices is published fo
table 6.4 of the latest *Employment Gazette*
of the annual supplement *Economic Tre*
earlier years. Comparable figures are n
output per head at three digit SIC level
publications are available in the Library.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secret
Employment whether he will publish a ta
percentage increase in average weekly
terms for full-time adult and male ma
manufacturing including overtime and ex
in the years April 1970 to 1974, 1974 to 19
and 1985 to 1990 together with the corre
for non-manuals generally; and whether
corresponding data for females.

Mr. Jackson: Information on the avera
earnings of full-time adult, manual a
employees in manufacturing is published
Part A of the annual new earnings survey

years in question. Information on the retail prices index (all items) to convert the figures to 1990 prices is published for April 1990 in table 6.4 of the latest *Employment Gazette*, and in table 26 of the annual supplement *Economic Trends* for April of earlier years. Copies of the publications are available in the Library.

George Kenyon

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he has received any representations regarding the death of George Kenyon at David Holt Plastics, Haslingden, Rossendale, on 24 May 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: I have received several letters from hon. Members about this case. Some enclosed copies of letters from the public urging me to reopen the manslaughter case against Mr. David Holt. However, that is a question for my right hon. Friend the Attorney-General, who is well aware of the circumstances of the case.

Following an investigation by HSE inspectors, legal proceedings under the Health and Safety at Work Etc. Act 1974 and the Factories Act 1961 were instituted against the two directors of David Holt Plastics Ltd. The company and the two directors received fines totalling £47,000.

In addition, the Crown Prosecution Service also brought charges of manslaughter against the directors. Norman Holt pleaded guilty and received a year's prison sentence suspended for two years. David Holt's plea of not guilty to manslaughter was accepted by the prosecution, although the judge ordered the case to remain on file.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he has received any reports from the Health and Safety Executive regarding the death of George Kenyon at David Holt Plastics, Haslingden, Rossendale, on 24 May 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: The HSE has kept me informed of the details of the case, but has not produced a formal report. Following an investigation by HSE inspectors, legal proceedings under the Health and Safety at Work Etc. Act 1974 and the Factories Act 1961 were instituted against the two directors of David Holt Plastics Ltd. The company and the two directors received fines totalling £47,000. In addition, the Crown Prosecution Service also brought charges of manslaughter against the directors. Norman Holt pleaded guilty and received a year's prison sentence suspended for two years. David Holt's plea of not guilty to manslaughter was accepted by the prosecution, although the judge ordered the case to remain on file.

Disability

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what consideration is being given to enacting anti-discrimination legislation to make unlawful discrimination against disabled people in employment and other areas modelled on the recent American Disabilities Act; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: The consultative document "Employment and Training for People with Disabilities", which was published on 29 June, sets out various options for encouraging the employment of people with disabilities. What action to take will be considered in the light of the comments we receive.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of Stat Employment what is being done to ensure that the cent. quota for the employment of disabled people is met.

Mr. Jackson: A number of specific steps are tak the Employment Service which include:

—an annual postal inquiry, into the extent to employers within the scope of the scheme (those with more workers) are employing registered disabled p

—employers revealed by the inquiry to be employi than the 3 per cent. quota are informed of their duti obligations under the scheme, including the need to permits before engaging other than registered di people;

—authorised officers conduct a continuing program inspections of the record which employers who are scope of the scheme are obliged to keep;

—wide distribution of the booklet "Disabled P (Employment) Acts 1944 and 1958. Employers tions: Notes for Guidance", and of the Emplo Service's code of good practice on the employm disabled people.

However, the main thrust of the Department's effo this area is through disablement resettlement offi actively helping the resettlement of people disabilities; and by disablement advisory service tea promoting constructive employment policies to people with disabilities.

Health and Safety at Work, ect. Act

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of Sta Employment whether the Health and Safety at Wor Act applies to Crown premises; and if it is enfor against such premises.

Mr. Forth: The Health and Safety at Work, et 1974 is enforceable against persons not premises. Th does apply to the Crown, but it cannot be enforced a the Crown in the courts or by the use of enforc notices. In practice, the Health and Safety Executi agreed with the Crown to seek compliance with healt safety standards through a system of Crown notices. notices either require the Crown to make improve within a specified time limit (Crown improvement n or to stop work immediately (Crown prohibition n

Youth Training

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of Stat Employment whether he has made any assessment financial contribution made by employers to the c youth training.

Mr. Jackson: I refer the hon. Member to the a given to him on 2 July 1990 at column *472*.

New Businesses

Mr. Grylls: To ask the Secretary of Stat Employment what is the net number of new busi being created each week so far in 1990.

Mr. Forth: During 1989, the latest period for figures have been published by my Departmen number of businesses registered for VAT increas nearly 1,700 a week on average. Early indications data collected by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise there continues to be a substantial surplus of registr over deregistrations.

Training and Enterprise Councils

Mr. Bellotti: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what measures he has taken to ensure that every training and enterprise council makes provision within its area for those with special needs.

Mr. Jackson *[holding answer 20 November 1990]:* Each training and enterprise council (TEC) is required to set out in its corporate and business plans how it intends to meet the requirements of people with special needs. In approving plans my Department will ensure that appropriate proposals showing how the TEC will address this issue are set out. TECs are bound by their contract with my Department to implement the provision of their plans.

SCOTLAND

Owner-occupation

19. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about the level of owner-occupation in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Over 50 per cent. of the total housing stock in Scotland is now owner occupied, compared to 35 per cent. in 1979.

Uplands Afforestation

20. **Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met representatives of the Forestry Commission to discuss the environmental consequences of afforestation in the uplands.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. and learned Friend met the Director General of the Forestry Commission in September when they discussed a wide range of forestry matters.

Constitutional Reform

21. **Mr. Maclennan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has on Scottish opinion concerning constitutional reform in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: The 1979 referendum demonstrated that, when faced with the full implications of constitutional reform, the Scottish electorate had no enthusiasm for it. Opinion polls have repeatedly indicated that the voters do not regard constitutional change as a priority issue.

Steel Plant Closures

22. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met the chairman of British Steel to discuss plant closures.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend last met the Chairman of British Steel on 7 November.

Redundancies

23. **Mr. Graham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what discussions he has had with firms in Renfrew district about impending redundancies; and what practical assistance his Department has been able to offer.

Mr. Lang: My Department is in close touch with companies in Renfrew district that have announced redundancies and has ensured that they are aware of the assistance available, through regional selective assistance, towards capital expenditure designed to create or safeguard jobs. Decisions on such investment are matters for the companies themselves.

Steel Industry

24. **Mr. Strang:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met trade union representatives from the steel industry to discuss future steel production in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend last met representatives of the steel trade unions on 14 November, when he met representatives of the Clydesdale unions. The discussion covered prospects for that plant.

26. **Dr. Reid:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next intends to meet the chairman of British Steel to discuss the scottish steel industry.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend met the Chairman of British Steel on 7 November. No further meetings are planned at present.

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many reports of potential Japanese or German purchasers of British Steel plants in Lanarkshire his Department has received and investigated.

Mr. Lang: Two reports of Japanese interest have been investigated. I am not aware of any reports of potential German purchasers of British Steel plants in Scotland.

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in the *Official Report* statements made about the Scottish steel industry by the Scottish Industry Minister over the period 8 to 12 November.

Mr. Lang: Over the period in question my only statements about the Scottish steel industry were made in response to the press and to the Young Conservative conference. Official records are not available for either of these occasions.

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has given to Locate in Scotland and British embassies about British Steel's willingness as sellers of its plants in Lanarkshire.

Mr. Lang: No specific information has been passed regarding British Steel's willingness to sell its plants.

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the dates over the past 12 months when he has met the chairman or other senior executives of British Steel; and when he next expects to meet them.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend met the chairman of British Steel and his chief executive on 15 May, 16 October and 7 November this year. He would expect to meet the chairman of British Steel again whenever appropriate.

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what discussions he has had or intends to have with British Steel about its future policy with regard to retaining or abandoning Glasgow as its price basing point.

Mr. Lang: Policy on price-basing points has not arisen during discussions between my right hon. and learned Friend and the chairman of British Steel.

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what instructions he has given to Locate in Scotland and British embassies about advertising the possible availability for sale of British Steel assets in Scotland; and when these instructions were first sent.

Mr. Lang: The assets belong to the company, not to the Government; therefore it is not for the Government to advertise the assets for sale.

Law Centres

25. **Mr. Vaz:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what provision is being made in introducing additional law centres into Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: There are no plans to introduce additional law centres in Scotland from centrally provided funds.

Local Government Finance

27. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of local government income in Scotland comes from *(a)* the charge payer, *(b)* the business rate payer and *(c)* revenue support grant.

Mr. Lang: On the basis of local authorities' budget estimates for 1990-91: 22 per cent. of local authority income will come from their community chargepayers; 23·4 per cent. from their business ratepayers; and 54·6 per cent. from revenue support grant and specific grants.

36. **Mr. Bill Walker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received about the unpaid community charge in Tayside; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend has received a number of representations about unpaid community charges from people living in Tayside region, including those who are concerned about the effect this may have on community charge levels next year. Local authorities have a number of powers available to them to enable them to collect arrears of community charge and they have a duty to make rigorous use of these to collect the charges due to them. It would be grossly unfair for any authority to increase next year's bills to cover non-payment and, instead, authorities should take account of any shortfall in income by adjusting their expenditure plans.

32. **Mr. Douglas:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a further statement on representations which have been made to him for the reform or abolition of the poll tax.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend has received a number of representations about different aspects of the community charge arrangements. We are always prepared to consider any suggestions for making the present arrangements more effective, and to take action where appropriate.

Scottish Homes

28. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next intends to meet the chairman of Scottish Homes concerning the provision of more housing.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend and I regularly meet Sir James Mellon, the chairman of Scottish Homes. Our last meeting took place on 23 October, when discussion covered a range of strategic issues, including the provision of housing. No date has yet been set for our next meeting.

Strathclyde Schools

29. **Mr. McAvoy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met representatives of Strathclyde regional council's education committee, to discuss the quality of education in schools in Strathclyde; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. and learned Friend has not recently had any such meeting. He met the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities on 6 July to discuss financial support for local authority services including education, and will do so again on 26 November.

Pittenweem Harbour

30. **Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if it is his intention to meet representatives of the fishing industry in north-east Fife to discuss the development of Pittenweem harbour.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Such a meeting was held in the hon. and learned Gentleman's constituency last week.

Integrated Transport System

31. **Mr. Darling:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proposals he has to ensure that Scotland has an integrated transport system by the year 2000; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: As my right hon. and learned Friend told the House on 17 October 1990, the Government believe in a balanced transport policy, providing users with as much choice as possible between competing forms of transport.

Manufacturing Employment

33. **Mr. Norman Hogg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many jobs in manufacturing have been lost since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: The net job losses in manufacturing in Scotland between 1979 and 1989 totalled 210,700. This figure should be regarded as provisional, as it may change when more data become available.

The table shows a components of change analysis of jobs in the manufacturing industry in Scotland between 1979 and 1989. The net loss of 210,700 includes 187,000 due to plant closures; 124,800 due to plant contraction; 58,400 new jobs due to plant openings; and 42,700 due to plant expansions.

Scotch Whisky Association

34. **Mr. Lambie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he will next meet representatives of the Scotch Whisky Association.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans at present to meet representatives of the Scotch Whisky Association.

Renfrewshire Economy

35. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans his Department has to improve the condition of the economy and manufacturing industry in Renfrewshire.

Mr. Lang: The Scottish Office continues to support economic development in Renfrewshire through the provision of financial assistance towards capital investment which creates or maintains employment, through the attraction of inward investment to the area, through its involvement in the Ferguslie Park partnership and through its support, through the SDA, for the Inverclyde initiative and a number of other local initiatives. In addition, Inverclyde benefits from enterprise zone status. For the future, the Renfrewshire local enterprise company will pursue economic development and training proposals within the framework of Scottish Enterprise.

GATT Talks

37. **Mr. Andrew Welsh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he is taking to defend Scotland's agricultural interests and rural areas; and what representations he has made regarding the general agreement on tariffs and trade talks which are taking place.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The arable and dairy sectors in Scotland have generally experienced a favourable year in 1990.

In the livestock sector, however, farm incomes are expected to fall again this year. The Government have already acted, by intervention in the beef sector, by raising the suckler cow premium in the less-favoured areas to the maximum sum payable, and by bringing forward the two advance payments of the sheep annual premium. The circumstances of livestock farmers in the hills and uplands in Scotland are currently being considered in the annual hill farming review.

My right hon. and learned Friend contributes fully to the Government's policy towards the general agreement on tariffs and trade.

Steel Mills

38. **Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met shop stewards from the Ravenscraig strip mill and Dalzell plate mill to discuss the future of the mills.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend met representatives of the Ravenscraig unions, covering the strip mill, on 10 October. I met representatives of the Dalzell trade unions on 15 October.

Earnings

39. **Sir David Steel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has any plans to improve the gathering of average earnings statistics for the regions of Scotland.

Mr. Rifkind: The Employment Department has no plans to change the new earnings survey sampling arrangements at present.

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what the level of average earnings is in the Borders region.

Mr. Rifkind: The new earnings survey is the only source of information on average earnings for areas within Scotland. It is not possible to provide an estimate of average earnings for the Borders region because the new earnings survey sample does not give sufficiently reliable estimates for this region.

Roads

40. **Mr. McKelvey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the rate of progress of upgrading Scottish roads.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The upgrading of the Scottish road network is progressing well. Particularly rapid progress continues to be made on our 1987 manifesto commitment to upgrade the A74 to motorway standard. Three sections of the route are now under construction and further sections will follow as resources and completion of statutory procedures allow.

Another of our priorities is the early completion of the central Scotland motorway network. Further extensions to the existing M74, M8 and M80 are planned over the next few years. Indeed, advance works are soon to commence on the northward extension of the existing M74 towards Glasgow with main works following on next year.

As well as these important additions to Scotland's motorway network, improvements will continue to be made on strategic trunk routes as well as other localised but worthwhile projects.

The significant increase in motorway and trunk road funding in recent years is evidence of the Government's commitment to the provision of the best possible trunk road network to serve Scotland in the latter half of the nineties and into the next century.

Nature Conservation

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what replies he has sent to the Scottish Sports Council's letter of 28 September about the organisation of nature conservation and countryside matters.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Scottish Sports Council letter of 28 September was in fact a response to the consultation paper on Scotland's Natural Heritage and the views expressed in it were taken into account along with all other such expressions of views as part of the consultation process. A specific reply would not therefore normally be issued but an acknowledgement was sent on 9 October. As the council published its response and it was also raised with me by the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), I have responded to the Chairman on 20 November and released my reply to the media. A copy has also been sent to the hon. Member for Linlithgow. It makes clear the Government's view that the access and recreation functions of the Countryside Commission for Scotland are most appropriately transferred to the new body, Scottish Natural Heritage, which will be best placed to offer advice on all issues affecting the natural heritage.

Private Detectives

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland on what authority the Central Legal Office used private detectives to monitor the behaviour of Carol Campbell.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Central Legal Office was acting on the instructions of Dumfries and Galloway health board which took the decision to use private detectives in this case in the light of legal advice from senior counsel and the Central Legal Office.

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his Department's policy on the use of private detectives by the Central Legal Office.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This is a matter for individual health boards in the light of legal advice.

Conservation

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list all those sites which have been *(a)* designated and *(b)* proposed for designation as (i) special protection areas under the European Community directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds or (ii) Ramsar sites under the convention on Wetlands of International Importance.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information for designated sites is set out in the table. Sites are designated by my right hon. and learned Friend on the recommendation of the Nature Conservancy Council. Those sites for which NCC has already made, or intends to make, a recommendation for designation are listed at table 3.1 of the Council's publication "Protecting Internationally Important Birds Sites", which is lodged in the Library.

(a) Designated sites
(i) Special protection areas

Site	*Island/District council*
Loch Druidibeg	Western Isles
Handa	Sutherland
Rhum	Lochaber
Priest Island	Ross and Cromarty
Loch Eye	Ross and Cromarty
Loch of Skene	Gordon
Abernethy Forest	Badenoch and Strathspey
Islay: Glac Na Criche	Argyll and Bute
Islay: Feur Lochain	Argyll and Bute
Islay: Loch Gruinart	Argyll and Bute
Islay: Bridgend Flats	Argyll and Bute
Islay: Laggan	Argyll and Bute
Islay: Eilean Na Muice Dubhe (Duich Moss)	Argyll and Bute
Ailsa Craig	Kyle and Carrick
Forth Islands	East Lothian, Kirkcaldy and North East Fife
Gladhouse Reservoir	Midlothian
Fala Flow	Midlothian
Hoselaw Loch	Roxburgh

(ii) Ramsar sites

Site	*Island/District council*
Loch an Duin	Western Isles
Loch Druidibeg	Western Isles
Claish Moss	Lochaber
Loch Eye	Ross and Cromarty
Loch of Skene	Gordon
Cairngorm Lochs	Kincardine and Deeside, Badenoch and Strathspey
Islay: Glac Na Criche	Argyll and Bute
Islay: Feur Lochain	Argyll and Bute
Islay: Loch Gruinart	Argyll and Bute
Islay: Bridgend Flats	Argyll and Bute
Islay: Eilean Na Muice Duibhe (Duich Moss)	Argyll and Bute
Loch Lomond	Dumbarton and Stirling
Silver Flowe	Wigtown
Loch of Lintrathen	Angus
Loch Leven	Perth and Kinross
Rannoch Moor	Perth and Kinross, Lochaber, Argyll and Bute
Gladhouse Reservoir	Midlothian
Fala Flow	Midlothian
Hoselaw Loch	Roxburgh

Cancer Screening

Sir Russell Johnston: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects a computerised call and recall system will be set up in order to allow all Scottish women to have regular cervical screening in whichever health board area they live.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Fully computerised call and recall systems are in operation in all health board areas except Highland and Lothian which have partially computerised systems. These boards expect to have full systems soon, Highland this financial year, and Lothian next financial year. In addition around 600 general practitioners now use GPASS—general practice administration system for Scotland—which also provides a computerised call and recall for cervical cytology.

Pelagic Fishermen

Mr. Robert Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what discussions he has had with the Scottish Pelagic Fishermen's Association on the withdrawal of the Export Credits Guarantee Department cover on trade with the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My noble Friend the Minister for Fisheries in Scotland has discussed the matter with the Scottish Pelagic Fishermen's Association, and is aware of the concerns of others in the pelagic industry in Scotland, regarding changes in the ECGD's arrangements covering trade with the USSR. My noble Friend is looking into the matter on their behalf and will write to the hon. Member when he has completed his inquiries.

Wild Foxes

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the total annual expenditure incurred by the Forestry Commission in controlling the numbers of the wild fox population.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Mansfield (Mr. Meale) on 1 November at column *723*.

Forests

Sir Hector Monro: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans the Government have with regard to continued public access to forests being disposed of by the Forestry Commission.

Mr. Rifkind: The Forestry Commission welcomes the public on foot to all its woodlands, provided that this does not conflict with forestry operations and that there is no legal or other constraint on public access.

In answer to a question from my hon. Friend on 16 June 1989, *Official Report*, columns *544-45*, I made a

statement on the Forestry Commission's disposals programme. In this I expressed the Government's concern that the general public should continue to enjoy access to those forests to be disposed of by the Commission in a way which is compatible with management for forestry and other purposes.

My right hon. Friends and I have given careful consideration to ways of achieving this objective. In doing so, we have had regard to the nature of access enjoyed by the public at present and the need to ensure that any measures which we adopt are effective, avoid needless bureaucracy and achieve a proper balance between public enjoyment and the ability of the new owner to manage his woodland.

We have concluded that it would not be appropriate to proceed by way of new legislation, since this could not be framed in a sufficiently flexible way to cover the widely differing circumstances affecting woodlands throughout Great Britain. The option of imposing access conditions on sale has also had to be ruled out on the basis of legal advice that these would be of doubtful effect against subsequent owners.

Instead, we have decided that the best way forward will be for the Government to ask the Forestry Commission to give advance notice to local authorities in England, Scotland and Wales of intended disposals of woodlands under its management, and to offer to enter into legal agreements with them which will provide for continued public access to the woodlands after sale. Such agreements will be compatible with the management of the woodlands for forestry and other purposes and will be binding on subsequent owners. These arrangements will apply to those woodlands where there are no existing legal or other constraints on public access to the land, and it will, of course, be up to individual local authorities to decide whether they wish to enter into an agreement with the Forestry Commission for any particular woodland prior to sale.

We see a number of advantages in these procedures. They can be introduced quickly. They will be tailored to suit local circumstances. Most importantly, the elected representatives of local people will be fully involved in the process, so reflecting the value that we attach to continued public use of the woodlands concerned.

The Forestry Commission, with the co-operation of the Countryside Commission and the Countryside Commission for Scotland, will publish Guidelines setting out the details of these arrangements, after consulting with appropriate public and private bodies concerned with public access to the countryside, forestry and land management.

We intend that the new arrangements will be introduced as soon as possible. In the meantime, the Forestry Commission will defer the sale of woodlands which are particularly sensitive in relation to public access.

By taking this initiative, we are demonstrating the Government's firm commitment to maintaining and improving public access to the countryside.

Greater Glasgow Health Board

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many members of staff the Greater Glasgow health board has in its public relations departments; what is the annual budget and running cost of this department and what is the value of the contract awarded by the board to an outside public relations consultancy to advise the board as to how it might improve its communications with the public and staff.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 19 November 1990]:* The public relations department of Greater Glasgow health board employs three officers and a secretary; expenditure for 1989-90 was £100,000 per annum. The value of any contracts placed with outside consultants is a matter of commercial confidence.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 22 November 1990

CIVIL SERVICE

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Jack: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service what progress has been made towards achieving equality of opportunity for women in the civil service.

Mr. Mellor: A report giving full details of progress made in 1989 has today been published by HMSO. I have arranged for a copy of the report to be placed in the Library.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Mortgage Repayments

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the average increase in repayments per week on the average mortgage in each region between 1 June 1988 and now.

Mr. Maples: Information for an average new mortgage is in the table. Details of average amounts outstanding on all mortgages by region are not available.

Region	*Average new mortgage*[1]	*Weekly payment*[2]		*Increase*
		June 1988 9·80 per cent. interest rate	*November 1990 14·[illegible] per cent. interest rate*	
	£	£	£	£
Northern	33,600	49·19	73·53	24·34
Yorkshire and Humberside	33,000	48·06	71·84	23·78
East Midlands	38,100	57·67	86·21	28·54
East Anglia	43,000	66·90	100·01	33·11
Greater London	59,800	98·57	147·35	48·78
South East	54,000	87·63	131·00	43·37
South West	45,000	70·67	105·65	34·98
West Midlands	37,400	56·35	84·24	27·89
North West	34,800	51·45	76·91	25·46
Wales	35,100	52·02	77·76	25·74
Scotland	32,500	47·12	70·43	23·32
Northern Ireland	23,600	33·36	49·87	16·51
United Kingdom	42,200	65·40	97·76	32·36

[1] Building Society mortgages, third quarter 1990.
[2] Assuming endowment mortgage.

Tanzania and Uganda

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the estimated cash flow saving per year to Tanzania and Uganda if all official bilateral creditors were to implement Trinidad terms for their debt.

Mr. Maples: Tanzania and Uganda owe bilateral official creditors about $2·7 billion and $0·5 billion respectively. Annual interest payments required in order to prevent these debt stocks from continuing to rise would be about $150 million for Tanzania, and $15 million for Uganda. These estimates take account of the different mix of concessional/non-concessional loans outstanding to the two countries. In order to repay the full stock of debt, average future total payments would have to be even higher. The application of Trinidad terms by all bilateral official creditors would mean no payments would be made for five years, with amounts paid rising steadily thereafter, so that the one third of the stock of debt remaining after the write-off would have been repaid after 25 years.

Premium Bonds

Ms. Quin: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will supply figures for the numbers of individuals purchasing premium bonds for each year from 1979 to date.

Mr. Maples: The numbers of individuals purchasing premium bonds is not available. The number of purchases of premium bonds for each calendar year from 1979 to date has been as follows:

	Thousands
1979	4,463·1
1980	4,103·1
1981	3,674·1
1982	3,298·3
1983	3,499·5
1984	3,328·6
1985	2,530·0
1986	1,949·8
1987	1,962·0
1988	2,036·7
1989	1,418·0
1990	[1]541·8

[1] January to October: provisional.

Ms. Quin: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has any plans to reduce the level of the minimum premium bond investment from £100.

Mr. Maples: No.

International Monetary Fund

Mr. John Townend: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement about the proposed amendment to the international monetary fund's articles of agreement.

Mr. Maples: The third amendment to the articles of agreement of the IMF empowers the fund to suspend the voting and related rights of members who do not fulfil their obligations under the fund's articles. This power is intended, in particular, to enable suspension of members in protracted arrears to the fund. The Government support the amendment. A Command Paper on the amendment is now available from the Vote Office.

TRANSPORT

Coach Speed Limiters

Mr. Roger King: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to change the present annual testing arangements for public service vehicle coach speed limiters; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: We are planning to incorporate a check of speed limiters into the annual PSV roadworthiness test as a statutory test item from 1 April 1991 and we shall be consulting on detailed proposals shortly. Once this change has been made any vehicle which is found to be in breach of the relevant regulations will fail the test. Until that time we shall be continuing to run the special campaign to check speed limiters during the PSV roadworthiness test. If vehicles which fall within the category to be tested are found not to have a speed limiter fitted, enforcement action will be taken.

Mr. Roger King: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the policy towards the obligation to fit a speed limiter to a public service vehicle coach be dependent on the owner or operator's declaration that vehicle is capable of achieving 70 mph.

Mr. Chope: It is the legal responsibility of the operat of a coach to determine whether or not any partic vehicle needs to have a speed limiter fitted. It would impracticable for the Department to road test ev vehicle to determine its maximum speed capability, but are well aware which makes of coach are likely to req speed limiters.

Mr. Roger King: To ask the Secretary of State Transport if he will make a statement on the level of pu service vehicle coach speed limiter fitment as it aff vehicles first registered between 1 April 1984 and 31 Ma 1989.

Mr. Chope: All coaches which have a maximum sp capability in excess of 70 mph, and which were first u since 1 April 1984 must now have speed limiters fit Operators with coaches which were first used betwee April 1974 and 31 March 1984 have until 31 March 1 to comply. Any operators found in breach of regulations risk tough punitive action as part of our spe enforcement campaign.

Civil Defence

Mr. Bill Michie: To ask the Secretary of State Transport how many civil servants are currently emplo *(a)* full time and *(b)* part time by his Department on c defence; what the total costs of employing staff on c defence duties were in 1989-90; what the total costs employing staff on civil defence duties are expected to in 1990-91; and whether he has any plans for these staf be transferred to work on other duties.

Mr. Freeman: The information required is as follo

Number of Full-time staff employed on 16 November 1990	*Number of Part-time staff employed on 16 November 1990*	*Total cost 1989-90*	*Total cost 1990-91*
38	5	£793,000	£775,000

My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary announced on 16 October that he had initiated a review of the options for the future of civil defence arrangements in the light of east-west relations. Future levels of expenditure on civil defence will depend upon the outcome of that review.

Wheel Clamping

Sir Dudley Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will consider legislation to regulate car-clamping activities, other than those carried out by the police or their express agents.

Mr. Chope: I am keeping the matter under review.

Motor Cyclists (Training)

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what facilities will be available by 1 December within *(a)* Orkney and *(b)* Shetland for the basic training necessary for obtaining a provisional motor cycle driving licence after 1 December.

Mr. Chope: Sites for use for basic training have b approved at Kirkwall in Orkney, and at Lerwick Shetland. I expect the operators of both these sites to offering basic training courses from 1 December. Un the regulations, all residents of the islands surrounding mainlands of Orkney and Shetland are exempt from requirement to undergo an approved basic training cou before riding on the road unaccompanied. They are a exempt from the need to produce a certificate completion of an approved training course in order to t an "L" test with the Driving Standards Agency. T follows the precedent of the exemptions for the exist part I motor cycle test which basic training will superse

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State Transport what steps he is taking to ensure that ther adequate provision for the compulsory basic training learner motor cyclists living in remote rural areas.

Mr. Chope: Since July my officials have been work closely with motor cycle training organisations, retail road safety officers and ACPO in a joint action group ensure that the whole of Great Britain is well covered

training sites, and training organisations. I expect almost the whole of Great Britain to be within 30 miles of a site operated by an approved training body. I welcome the fact that in the Highland region, the regional council has let a contract for the supply of training at 11 sites that might not be commercially viable.

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will consider the introduction of a fixed period exemption for learner motor cyclists through the issue of a provisional licence for the duration of the training period to those living in remote areas not served by public transport.

Mr. Chope: Compulsory basic training is designed to improve the safety of all new learner motor cycle and moped riders on our roads. There is no road safety benefit in allowing some riders to avoid the training that others are required to take and after consultation I am satisfied that there will be adequate coverage of facilities except in the smaller islands where a total exemption applies.

Tactile Surfaces

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what research his Department is carrying out into tactile surfaces to warn the blind, and advise as to safe routes and information points; when the results of the research will be published and advice notes circulated to highway authorities; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what action he intends to take to ensure standardisation of tactile paving and similar initiatives across the country as a whole.

Mr. Freeman: Advice was issued to all local authorities by my Department in 1986 on the use of a specific tactile surface in conjunction with dropped kerbs at controlled crossings. Similar advice will shortly be issued to local authorities on the use of the same tactile surface at uncontrolled crossings and side streets.

My Department has also commissioned research into the usefulness of a range of other tactile surfaces to provide guidance and warning for blind and partially sighted pedestrians. Trials with those surfaces are currently under way and we will issue advice early in 1991 to local authorities on the appropriate use of each surface in the pedestrian environment.

Public Transport

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many licensed public transport vehicles have operated within the United Kingdom on an annual basis from 1979 to 1989.

Mr. Chope: The information for the end of December each year is as follows:

Licensed public transport vehicles with nine or more seats: United Kingdom

Year	*thousands*
1979	75
1980	73
1981	71
1982	69
1983	69
1984	69
1985	68
1986	70
1987	72
1988	74
1989	75

Leighton Linslade Bypass

Mr. Madel: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether, during the construction of the Leighton Linslade southern bypass by Bedfordshire county council, he will agree to an access from the Totternhoe Lime and Stone Company to the bypass; whether such an access is permitted within the existing guidelines; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: The Leighton Linslade southern bypass will ultimately form part of the east-west route referred to in the White Paper "Roads for Prosperity". This will be a major strategic route from the M40 to the east coast ports.

The Secretary of State would not wish to see a direct access from the Totternhoe Lime and Stone Company on to the bypass for reasons of safety and because it would restrict the free flow of traffic.

Existing guidelines indicate that such accesses should be restricted in the interests of traffic and safety.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the total number of staff employed by his Department; and under what headings they are employed.

Mr. Freeman: A total of 16,675 staff are currently employed by the Department of Transport, including its executive agencies, under the following main headings:

	Percentage of total staff
Department of Transport Central including—	43
Public transport	
Highways safety and traffic	
Aviation, shipping and international work	
Personnel management and finance	
Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency	35
Driving Standards Agency	13
Vehicle Inspectorate Executive Agency	8
Vehicle Certification Agency	1
	100

Cyclists

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what level of consultation his Department has with cycling organisations; and what action is taken to encourage local highway authorities to similarly consult with cyclists over matters concerning access and safety.

Mr. Chope: We have regular discussion with cycling organisations on local, regional and national issues affecting cycling. We consult the main organisations representing cycling on our proposed publications and statutory regulations in the traffic and signing field. Individual schemes affecting trunk roads can be discussed at regional office level.

It is for local highway authorities to decide for themselves how to consult local cycling interests on issues affecting their roads. We are aware that many authorities have established helpful relationships in their areas.

North Sea Installations (Inspections)

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many inspectors have been deployed full time on the inspection of North sea oil and gas installations in each year since 1978; and what was the establishment in each year.

Mr. McLoughlin: Marine surveyors in my Department undertake the examination of fire-fighting arrangements and life-saving appliances on offshore installations on behalf of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy. Work on offshore activities is integrated with other duties of marine surveyors and is estimated to account for about eight man years in 1978 rising to 12 man years in 1987, where it has remained. There is no established complement of surveyors for these duties and surveyors are made available whenever they are required.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many prosecutions have been mounted in each year since 1978 following inspections by his staff of North sea oil and gas installations.

Mr. McLoughlin: None. The enforcement of safety legislation for offshore installations is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy.

Drink-Driving

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the total number of road accidents, injuries and fatalities which took place when the driver was found to be over the legal alcohol limit; and if he will show injuries and fatalities separately for children aged under five years, for the years 1988 and 1989.

Mr. Chope: It is estimated that in 1988 there were 14,600 injury accidents in which at least one driver or rider involved was over the legal alcohol limit. It is estimated that 840 people were killed in those accidents, 5,650 were seriously injured and 16,200 were slightly injured. Figures for 1989 are not final, as returns from coroners are not yet complete, but current indications suggest that the final outturn will be very similar to the 1988 levels.

Children under five years of age make up only a small proportion of casualties in drink-drive accidents. In 1988 there were four children under five killed, 23 seriously injured and 123 slightly injured in accidents where it was established beyond doubt that at least one driver or rider was over the legal alcohol limit. In 1989 the corresponding figures so far are three killed, 25 seriously injured and 108 slightly injured.

Community Transport

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport which local authorities and passenger transport authorities financially support community transport initiatives in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Freeman: The passenger transport executives and many councils support special needs transport for the elderly or mobility handicapped. We do not however have comprehensive information about local authority support for community transport initiatives.

HOME DEPARTMENT

PC Surinder Singh

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State Home Department how much it cost the Nottingh police authority to defend the case of racial discrin brought by PC Surinder Singh; and how much it Commission for Racial Equality to prosecute the

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I understand that the total cost case for both Nottinghamshire police authority Commission for Racial Equality have yet determined. I will write to the hon. Member as soo information is available.

Police Cells

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State Home Department what guidelines are provided Department on the use of wicket gates in police c

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Home Office guidance on th cell door service hatches (known as "wicket specifies that where cell doors are fitted with a dro service hatch, the hatch should not be left open w cell is occupied by a prisoner.

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State Home Department how many prisoners were being police cells at the latest date for which inform available.

Mrs. Rumbold: On Wednesday 21 Novemb prisoners were held in police cells.

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State Home Department what his Department's guidel on the care of suicidal people in police stations; an that information is contained.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Home Office has iss guidelines on the care of persons in police custo suicidal tendencies. The codes of practice iss accordance with section 66 of the Police and C Evidence Act 1984 require custody officers to sur force medical examiner if any detainee appears to medical attention, which would include a perso known suicidal tendencies. It is for chief police of issue any instructions necessary to ensure th requirements of the codes are met.

Police Complaints System

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State Home Department (1) if his Department will b collect and monitor data on the ethnic ori complainants in the statistics they gather from th forces in the United Kingdom in order to ass effectiveness of the police complaints system;

(2) what is his policy in respect of the case for th Complaints Authority to gather data on the ethnic of complainants in cases that it has dealt with.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No central data are currently c on complainants since they are not always the ag party and sometimes have no direct involvement complaint. Complaints of racially discriminatory viour accounted for less than 1 per cent. of all con made against the police in 1989, both in the Metro police district and elsewhere in England and Wal

The Police Complaints Authority does not seek personal data of any kind from police forces for statistical purposes, nor has it specific powers to do so. I understand, however, that the authority intends to start publishing details of the number of complaints of racially discriminatory behaviour in its annual report for 1990.

Distress Warrants

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of distress warrants issued by magistrates courts in 1989.

Mr. John Patten: Around 590,000 distress warrants in respect of fine and fee accounts and maintenance accounts were issued by magistrates courts in 1989.

Gaming

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the regulation of the promotion of gaming by radio advertising.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: One reflection of our well-established policy that demand for gambling should not be encouraged unduly is that neither gaming nor betting may be advertised by broadcast. Subject to that, we are considering advice from the Gaming Board for Great Britain on proposals by the Bingo Association of Great Britain that the current prohibition on the advertising in any medium of specific licensed bingo clubs as places where gaming takes place, under the Gaming Act 1968, should be revised so as to allow the advertising of bingo clubs as such both in print and by radio.

Civil Defence

Mr. Bill Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many civil servants are currently employed *(a)* full time and *(b)* part time by his Department on civil defence; what the total costs of employing staff on civil defence duties were in 1989-90; what the total costs of employing staff on civil defence duties are expected to be in 1990-91; and whether he has any plans for these staff to be transferred to work on other duties.

Mr. John Patten: The information requested is as follows:

Number of full-time staff employed on 16 November 1990	*Number of part-time staff employed on 16 November 1990*	*Total cost 1989-90* £	*Estimated total cost 1990-91* £
166	13	3,092,756	3,302,000

My right hon. and learned Friend announced in reply to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Hague) on 16 October at column *773* that he had initiated a review of the options for the future of civil defence arrangements in the light of east-west relations. Future levels of expenditure on civil defence will depend on the outcome of that review.

Malicious Communications

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to publish data for 1989 relating to prosecutions under the Malicious Communications Act 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: The Command Paper "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales 1989" and its five supplementary volumes were published on 16 November 1990. Copies are available in the Library.

Information on the Malicious Communications Act 1988 is given in the table.

Persons prosecuted under the Malicious Communications Act 1988 England and Wales 1989

	Number
Prosecutions	49
Convicted	40
Sentenced:	40
Absolute discharge	1
Conditional discharge	7
Probation Order	1
Fine	30
Other	1

Michael Hickey

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what response has been given by the governor of Long Lartin to the request that the psychiatrist Dr. McKeith be permitted to examine Michael Hickey.

Mrs. Rumbold: A request for a visit by Dr. McKeith was made in a letter from Mr. Hickey's solicitors on 13 November 1990. There are no objections to Dr. McKeith examining Mr. Hickey.

Birmingham Public Inquiry Office

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department on what date he plans to open the proposed Birmingham public inquiry office; and whether he has yet identified premises for its location.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We intend to open the office when the necessary funding can be made available. The location will be the immigration office at Birmingham airport.

Alcohol Consumption (Public Places)

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects the advice on new byelaws prohibiting the drinking of alcohol in public places to be issued to local authorities.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Details of the new model byelaw prohibiting the consumption of intoxicating liquor in designated public places were issued to district and borough councils in England and Wales in Home Office circular No 88/1990 on 29 October. A copy of the circular is available in the Library.

ENERGY

Piper Alpha

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) if any of Lord Cullen's report was not included in the two published volumes;

(2) why his departmental press office advised the press that the Cullen report was over 800 pages.

Mr. Wakeham: Lord Cullen's report, as received by me on 22 October, ran to over 900 pages in typescript. My departmental press office, when approached, advised the press prior to publication that the report was a "substantial" document. The report as printed by HMSO was proof-read by a team under the supervision of Lord Cullen himself. The printed version, as the hon. Member will be aware, is about 500 pages long.

Electricity Privatisation

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether he will review the proposed timetable for privatisation of PowerGen following the resignation of its chairman.

Mr. Wakeham: No. It remains the Government's firm intention, subject to market conditions, to offer shares in National Power and PowerGen for sale to the public in February 1991.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what percentage fees are to be paid to the companies underwriting the flotation of the electricity distribution companies.

Mr. Wakeham: The commission rates to be paid to the underwriters of the sale of the regional electricity companies, subject to the terms of the underwriting agreements, will be

	percentage
United Kingdom primary underwriting	0·1700
United Kingdom sub-underwriting	1·2500
Overseas underwriting	1·2448

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list the firms underwriting the flotation of the electricity distribution companies.

Mr. Wakeham: The names of the firms underwriting the offers for sale of the regional electricity companies are set out in the prospectus.

PowerGen

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) when he last met Sir Graham Day or spoke to him on the telephone prior to Friday 16 November;

(2) when he was informed of the imminent resignation of Robert Malpas as chairman of PowerGen;

(3) if he will give the dates of his last six meetings with Robert Malpas as chairman of PowerGen.

Mr. Wakeham: I have meetings and consultations with the directors of PowerGen, as of other companies in the electricity supply industry, whenever necessary. Such meetings and consultations are confidential.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State f
(1) whether he has discussed with Robert Mal
chairman of PowerGen the use of the least-cost
to electricity industry investment;

(2) whether he has had discussions with Robe
as the chairman of PowerGen about the need
conservation.

Mr. Wakeham: The details of my discussions
Malpas, in his capacity as the chairman of Powe
confidential.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State f
whether his predecessor approved the appoi
Robert Malpas as chairman of PowerGen.

Mr. Wakeham: I refer the hon. Member to t
my right hon. Friend the Member for City of Ch
Morrison) gave to my hon. Friend the Me
Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill) on 9 Jun
column *632*.

Offshore Safety

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State f
(1) what consultations he has had with the H
Safety Commission about the appointment of a
to Mr. Petrie as head of offshore safety;

(2) why he has decided to proceed with the s
the successor to Mr. Petrie as head of offshore sa
than leaving the appointment to the Health a
Commission.

Mr. Wakeham: There is no intention to re
Petrie as director of safety. Offshore safety is, h
become the responsibility of a new head of
whom Mr. Petrie will report. Mr. Tony Barrell
Health and Safety Executive, has been appoin
new post. The Health and Safety Commission h
welcomed the new appointment.

Home Energy Efficiency

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State f
(1) what criteria were applied by him and his
agency in drawing up the regional allocations
home energy efficiency scheme;

(2) if he will give a regional breakdow
allocations under the home energy efficienc
during *(a)* January to March 1991 and *(b)* th
year 1991-92.

Mr. Wakeham: The home energy efficiency s
national scheme, and no regional allocations
have been made. However, it is impo
organisations wishing to apply to become
installers" in particular localities that they sh
some broad indication of the scale of insulation
which they might be able to undertake using gr
the home energy efficiency scheme. The ene
grants agency therefore has included with the in
it is sending to applicants a preliminary view on
on numbers in receipt of housing benefit in eac
The figures provided by the agency are
allocation, nor an estimate of the total valu
which might be undertaken by all contractors o
that locality.

Clean Coal Technology

Mr. Andy Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what action is proposed by his Department on clean coal technology.

Mr. Baldry: The Government attach great importance to developing clean coal technologies and technologies aimed at maximising the economically recoverable coal from indigenous coal reserves.

We are, therefore, carrying out a major review of our coal research programme and plan to publish a new strategy as an energy paper early next summer. To help us develop this new strategy my Department has established a new advisory body—the coal task force. The task force held its first meeting this morning. Over the next few months it will examine all aspects of coal research, including extraction, coal preparation, utilisation and conversion.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Special Educational Needs

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what was the total number of hours of home tuition provided each week to children with a statement of special educational needs by each local education authority for each of the last five years;

(2) what was the average number of hours of home tuition received per week by each child with a statement of special educational needs in each local education authority for each of the last five years.

Mr. Alan Howarth: This information is not collected centrally.

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many children with a statement of special needs have been *(a)* excluded from attending school and *(b)* unable to attend school in each local education authority for each of the last five years.

Mr. Alan Howarth: This information is not available centrally.

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the statutory requirements on local education authorities to provide home tuition for children with a statement of special needs who *(a)* have been excluded from school and *(b)* are unable to attend school; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Section 7(2) of the Education Act 1981 provides that, in any case where a local education authority maintains a statement of special educational needs for a child, it is the duty of the authority to arrange that the special educational provision specified in the statement is made for him or her unless the parent has made suitable arrangements.

University Salaries

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will state the average salary of vice-chancellors in United Kingdom universities, together with the average percentage increase in their salaries, for each year since 1980, as recorded for all institutions which supply a return in box 1 of the university statistical record annual return.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The information requested is not available to the Department. It is for each university to set the salary of its vice-chancellor.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give the number of professors in United Kingdom universities with salaries in each £1,000 band from £27,000 upwards.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Information in the form requested is not readily available. However, the table sets out details of professorial salaries in broad salary bands. The data relate to universities in the United Kingdom at December 1989.

Professorial Salary Bands

£	Number
26,250—27,819	537
27,820—28,704	479
28,705—29,609	452
29,610—30,549	554
30,550—31,549	430
31,550—32,589	311
32,590—33,654	220
33,655—34,669	123

In addition, 184 university professors receive salaries over £34,670 pa.

All figures apply to non-clinical academic professors who are wholly university funded.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list *(a)* the numbers of men and women who have received awards from the 1 per cent. of academic and related pay set aside for allocation on merit or market criteria since 1 April 1989, *(b)* the proportions which the above represent of all men and women academic staff and *(c)* the proportions of the 1 per cent. funds that have been received by men and women since 1 April 1989.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The information is not available in the form requested. Information supplied by the UFC in June 1990 indicates that, at that time, it was intended that about 6,000 academics would receive payments from the 1 per cent. of the pay bill set aside to reward individual merit and to help counter staffing difficulties. This figure excludes returns from two universities for which data were not then available. The actual number to benefit from the scheme will be known later; the UFC has been asked to supply us with full details of the implementation of the schemes by 31 December 1990. The figure of 6,000 represents approximately 20 per cent. of all wholly university-funded full-time and part-time academic staff*.

*Based on USR statistics, 1988-89.

Research Councils

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how much money has been paid out by each of the research councils in respect of 1 per cent. awards and what proportion this represents of each research council's total university funding.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The SERC has so far paid out £47,473 in respect of 1 per cent. pay additions arising from the 1989 university pay settlement. This represents 0·032 per cent. of the SERC's total research grant funding to higher education institutions in 1989-90. Further claims are expected.

The AFRC has so far paid out £10,000 in respect of 1 per cent. pay additions. The per annum figure rate of payment is currently £7,000, which represents 0·047 per cent. of the AFRC's total research grant funding to higher education institutions in 1989-90.

The other three research councils do not keep figures centrally, and the information could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Academic Posts

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will state *(a)* the total amount of funding made available under the academic "new blood" scheme and the total amount taken up, *(b)* the total amount of funding made available under the new academic appointments scheme and the total amount taken up, *(c)* the numbers of men and women academics appointed under each of the two schemes and *(d)* the numbers of men and women appointed under each of the two schemes who are still in post.

Mr. Alan Howarth: *(a)* The total funding allocated by the University Grants Committee between academic years 1983-84 and 1985-86 under the "new blood" scheme and for new posts in information technology was £40·9 million. All allocated funding was taken up by universities.

(b) The amount allocated by the Universities Funding Council under the new academic appointments scheme in academic year 1989-90 was £13·4 million. It is estimated that all allocated funding was taken up by universities.

(c) Information about the total number of men and women academics appointed under the schemes is not readily available.

(d) Of the total of 792 academics appointed under the "new blood" scheme, 739 were in post in March 1989. A further 46 posts had been replaced through new appointments. Comparable figures are not yet available for the new academic appointments scheme.

Student Awards

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how much financial assistance was offered to students by local authority intermediate awards in the last financial year.

Mr. Eggar: The latest data available are for the academic year 1988-89. LEA expenditure on discretionary (section 2) awards granted at less than the mandatory rate was £94·4 million split as follows:

Percentage of mandatory rate	*Expenditure (£ millions)*
80-99	27·1
50-79	13·9
below 50	53·5

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what financial assistance is available for further education students, with parents on low incomes or in receipt of benefits; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Under section 2 of the Education Act 1962, LEAs have discretionary power to bestow awards on persons who have left school in respect of courses which do not attract mandatory awards. Since S further education access fund has given funds to support full-time students ag further education courses.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secre Education and Science how much finan awarded to students by local au maintenance allowances in the last fin

Mr. Eggar: The latest available academic year 1988-89. The financial to students by local authority educ allowances was £11·2 million in that y

School Grants

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of S and Science if he will publish a tab amounts of capital allocations for cou controlled schools for 1991-92 for education authority in England has bid capital grant for voluntary aided sch which each local education authority Department and *(c)* *(a)* and *(b)* for e authority and with totals in respect of England, and for each region.

Mr. Fallon: The information reque the table. The figures are taken from t 1991-92 submitted by each local educati Department. I will provide a regional information shortly.

LEA plans for Capital Expenditure

LEA	*LEA p County and sch £'*
Avon	17,
Barking	2,
Barnet	4,
Barnsley	1,
Bedfordshire	8,
Berkshire	9,
Bexley	6,
Birmingham	20,
Bolton	3,
Bradford	23,
Brent	8,
Bromley	8,
Buckinghamshire	12,
Bury	2,
Calderdale	2,
Cambridge	28,
Camden	3,
Cheshire	9,
City	
Cleveland	11,
Cornwall	18,
Coventry	7,
Croydon	20,
Cumbria	16,
Derbyshire	27,
Devon	23,
Doncaster	1,
Dorset	11,
Dudley	8,
Durham	17,
E. Sussex	28,
Ealing	11,
Enfield	15,
Essex	66
Gateshead	8,

LEA	LEA plans County and VC schools £'000s	Voluntary aided schools £'000s
Gloucester	10,816	1,694
Greenwich	1,867	201
Hackney	6,848	162
Hammersmith	5,923	1,357
Hampshire	35,504	2,994
Haringey	7,415	1,412
Harrow	3,505	172
Havering	4,334	159
Hereford and Worcester	13,018	2,580
Hertford	11,937	2,302
Hillingdon	9,908	905
Hounslow	5,029	236
Humberside	21,536	1,400
Isles of Scilly	215	0
Isle of Wight	6,806	260
Islington	5,017	181
Kensington	7,794	3,580
Kent	45,605	7,737
Kingston	3,740	646
Kirkless	5,395	326
Knowsley	5,319	1,329
Lambeth	6,532	937
Lancashire	27,625	6,534
Leeds	41,168	12,626
Leicester	13,179	967
Lewisham	9,263	329
Lincoln	22,655	1,753
Liverpool	13,842	8,180
Manchester	20,909	1,305
Merton	7,950	228
North Yorkshire	6,272	2,005
North Tyneside	4,587	251
Newcastle	9,293	1,050
Newham	15,067	284
Norfolk	8,702	587
Northampton	12,945	400
Northumberland	5,411	1,175
Nottinghamshire	10,803	1,359
Oldham	13,674	609
Oxfordshire	23,119	4,178
Redbridge	4,384	3,399
Richmond	4,319	902
Rochdale	12,623	756
Rotherham	3,386	385
South Tyneside	6,651	59
Salford	7,116	567
Sandwell	6,536	351
Sefton	5,488	2,233
Sheffield	4,073	885
Shropshire	16,740	318
Solihull	4,548	687
Somerset	10,357	2,135
Southwark	6,086	1,616
St. Helens	4,852	2,299
Staffordshire	10,723	2,084
Stockport	2,570	341
Suffolk	17,956	890
Sunderland	7,788	523
Surrey	10,255	2,9
Sutton	10,663	3,
Tameside	2,311	
Tower Hamlets	29,116	
Trafford	5,313	
West Sussex	13,804	2,
Wakefield	10,475	
Walsall	3,364	
Waltham	10,238	1,
Wandsworth	13,503	
Warwick	5,704	3,
Westminster	7,041	
Wigan	9,725	2,
Wiltshire	15,552	1,
Wirral	5,661	1,
Wolverhampton	5,788	
England	1,255,953	167,9

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Educati and Science if he will publish a table giving the amoun for England of capital allocations for *(a)* county a voluntary controlled schools, *(b)* voluntary aided schoo and *(c)* the totals of *(a)* and *(b)* for each financial ye from and including 1978-79 to 1990-91 expressed in current prices, (ii) constant prices and (iii) an index of where 1978-79 = 100, together with such estimates f expenditure in 1991-92 on a comparable basis as a already available from the autumn statement.

Mr. Fallon: Not all the information is available in t form requested. The table shows figures from 1981-8 Prior to 1981-82, local education authorities did n receive block allocations, but were notified annually, in t context of a rolling programme, of a limit on the value building starts in the following year.

From 1981-82 to 1989-90 allocations for spending c capital works were made to local education authorities f schools and colleges of further and higher education, accordance with the Local Government, Planning an Land Act 1980. It was for each local education authori to decide how to use its allocation, including apportio ment between schools and colleges, and the extent which it wished to supplement it through the use of capit receipts and other sources of revenue.

Figures for 1990-91 and 1991-92 (in the table) are n comparable with previous years. Following the Loc Government and Housing Act 1989, the Departme issues an annual capital guideline to each local educatio authority, which is one element in the calculation of eac local authority's basic credit approval announced by th Department of the Environment.

Total allocations and annual capital guidelines for England in cash and constant terms

£ millio

	Local authority schools and colleges			Voluntary aided and special agreement schools			Local authority schools and colleges voluntary aided and special agreement		
	Cash	Constant 81-82 prices	Index 81-82 prices	Cash	Constant 81-82 prices	Index 81-82 prices	Cash	Constant 81-82 prices	Index 81-82 prices
1981-82	355	355	100	24	24	100	379	379	100
1982-83	338	316	89	22	21	87	360	337	89
1983-84	295	263	74	19	17	71	314	280	74
1984-85	300	255	72	25	21	87	325	276	73
1985-86	315	254	71	31	25	104	346	279	74
1986-87	297	231	65	28	22	92	325	253	67

	Local authority schools and colleges			Voluntary aided and special agreement schools			Local authority schools and colleges voluntary aided and special agreement		
	Cash	Constant 81-82 prices	Index 81-82 prices	Cash	Constant 81-82 prices	Index 81-82 prices	Cash	Constant 81-82 prices	Index 81-82 prices
1987-88	306	226	64	32	23	97	338	250	66
1988-89	387	266	75	43	29	123	430	296	78
1989-90	352	228	64	56	36	150	408	264	70
1990-91	485	291	82	74	44	185	559	335	88
1991-92	538	304	86	84	47	198	622	352	93

Notes to the table

1. All figures are in £ million. All figures are rounded.
2. Constant prices are calculated at 1981-82 prices using the latest GDP deflators. The index for 1981-82 is set at 100.
3. The Department provides grant aid at a rate of 85 per cent. on governors' capital expenditure at voluntary aided and special agreement schools.
4. Capital grant figures for the voluntary aided sector for the year 1981-82 are not separately identifiable from a single building grant figure which includes repairs and maintenance. The capital figures shown for this year are based on an apportionment of the building grant figure using the average ratio between capital and repairs during 1982-83 and 1985-86.
5. Prior to 1981-82 local authorities did not receive block allocation, but were notified annually in the context of a rolling programme of a limit on the value of the building starts in the following year.
6. Local authority allocations for 1989-90 and ACGs for 1990-91 and 1991-92 exclude institutions which were transferred to the PCFC sector in 1989-90.

Students

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many persons between the ages of 18 and 30 years entered full-time further education in the last financial year.

Mr. Eggar: In 1989-90, there were 76,000 full-time first-year students aged 18-30 studying on further education courses in England.

Mature Students (Housing Benefit)

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what study he is making of the impact of the withdrawal of housing benefit on the numbers of mature students following courses in further education.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The annual further education statistical records monitor the number of mature students in further education. Mature students with dependants, those who are disabled and part-time students will, of course, retain entitlement to benefits.

ENVIRONMENT

Metropolitan Water Board "B" Shares

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information was available to the Government about the liabilities of the Metropolitan Water Board to the holders of "B" stock at the time of flotation of Thames Water.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: At the time of the flotation of Thames Water in 1989 the Government were aware of a possibility of outstanding liabilities in respect of such stocks, and this was reflected in a note on contingent liabilities in the privatisation prospectus.

Archery

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what implications COM(90) 453 has for the sport of archery.

Mr. Atkins: Although COM(90) 453 concerns the control of the acquisition and possession of weapons, I now understand that it will not have any effect on the sport of archery.

Mineral Workings

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give full details of the research project he has recently commissioned into the environmental effects of mineral workings; who has been awarded the contract in each case; and when he expects the findings to be published.

Mr. Atkins: Roy Waller Associates was commissioned last year to review and examine the environmental impacts of surface mineral extraction and how they can be controlled most effectively. This is a broad-based project looking at the major problems of traffic, blasting, noise, dust, visual and landscape effects. The final report will propose a number of steps to ameliorate the environmental impact of mineral working. Areas for further research will also be identified. Publication of the final report is expected in spring 1991.

The findings of a more detailed research project carried out by W. S. Atkins Engineering Sciences Ltd. on "The Control of Noise at Surface Mineral Workings" have recently been published by HMSO and copies are already lodged in the House of Commons Library.

Lead Pipes

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what grants are available to assist domestic consumers to replace old lead feeder pipes from the water mains into their homes.

Mr. Key: Both mandatory and discretionary renovation grants under part VIII of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 are available towards the cost of replacing lead water supply pipes on land owned by the grant applicant, subject to a test of the applicant's financial resources.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish tables showing for each local authority either the planned use of balances to support revenue expenditure in 1990-91 or the amount to be used to replenish balances as appropriate.

Mr. Portillo: I have today arranged for the available information to be placed in the Library.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will obtain a copy of "Local Government Finance, the 1990 reforms", by Michael Ridge and Stephen Smith, published in *Fiscal Studies* August 1990 (Vol. 11, No. 3), for his Department's library.

Mr. Key: The Department's library already has a copy of the journal in which this article appears.

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on progress in collection of the community charge in England and Wales.

Mr. Key *[holding answer 21 November 1990]:* Information from regular quarterly returns supplied by local authorities confirms that around nine out of 10 charge payers had begun paying their charges by the end of September. In many areas this figure is already approaching 100 per cent. and I look to all authorities to achieve figures close to this during the balance of this financial year. Collection of the community charge in Wales is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Keynsham Chew Valley Inquiry

Mr. Aspinwall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to publish the result of the Keynsham Chew valley local plan inquiry, held in December 1989 and January 1990; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: The inspector has now completed his report to the local planning authority, Wansdyke district council, following this complex inquiry. It will be sent to the council shortly: publication is a matter for it.

Housing Associations

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the rate of take-up of funds allocated by the Housing Corporation to housing associations in the different regions of the country; and if he will make a statement on whether the funds taken up by housing associations in the different regions of England have been expended by them in total.

Mr. Key: This is a matter for the Housing Corporation. I have therefore asked the corporation to respond to my hon. Friend direct.

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment on what basis he will continue to contribute to neighbourhood care and repair schemes run by housing associations.

Mr. Key: As I announced on 19 October, from 1 April 1991, 50 per cent. of the running costs of approved home improvement agencies, including those run by housing associations, will be met by Government grant. Local housing authorities are responsible for the co-ordination and submission of such bids by the end of the month.

Disability

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment under the new provisions for house adaptations for people with disabilities, how many people have been denied grants or been given reduced grants to make adaptations to their homes because they do not meet the means test.

Mr. Key: The information requested is not yet available. The impact of the new house renovation grant system is, however, being monitored closely.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if the Government will introduce legislation to amend the Town and Country Planning Act to make it unlawful to erect or adapt buildings without approved access facilities for disabled people, and to provide for all existing buildings to be adapted in the same way with cash grants available from central Government for the owners of such buildings, with such adaptations subject to checks annually by the disablement advisory service.

Mr. Key: There is already a requirement in the Building Regulations 1985 that reasonable provision must be made to enable disabled people to gain access to new offices and shops, and to the principal entrance storey of new factories, educational buildings covered by the regulations, and other premises to which the public are admitted. Consultation proposals have been issued recently which would have the effect of extending this requirement to all floors of all new non-domestic buildings and to certain alterations and extensions to existing buildings. Research is being carried out into the technical problems involved in extending such a requirement to other alterations and extensions of non-domestic buildings.

Under the adaptations to premises and equipment scheme, administered by the Department of Employment through the disablement advisory service, a grant of up to £6,000 may be awarded to an employer, towards the cost of adapting premises and equipment for an existing disabled employee or a disabled new recruit. Employers are expected to contribute and to undertake to recruit a disabled person with similar needs as a replacement in the event of the original employee leaving. Grants are most commonly provided for adaptations to toilets and improved access to a building. An evaluation of the Department of Employment special schemes was published by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Employment on 2 November 1990 and comments invited by 2 February 1991.

Peat

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will issue guidance to planning authorities which would highlight the importance of refusal of planning permission for the extraction of peat from sites of special scientific interest.

Mr. Atkins: Local authorities have to reach decisions on individual planning applications on their merits, having due regard to all relevant material considerations. "Material considerations" include relevant national

policies, such as the protection of designated sites of special scientific interest. The Department of the Environment's existing guidance in circular 27/87 "Nature Conservation" and minerals planning guidance note 2 requires that proposals for the extraction of peat and other minerals from SSSIs should be subject to the most rigorous examination, in which the need for the mineral has to be balanced against environmental considerations. The Government are giving further consideration to the issues raised by peat extraction and nature conservation, and this includes whether there is a need for further advice.

I also welcome the agreement reached recently between the Nature Conservancy Council and the Peat Producers Association whereby, pending an agreed peatland strategy, members of the association will not make any planning applications to work existing or proposed peatland SSSIs without the prior agreement of the NCC.

Sewage Sludge

Mr. Summerson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to ensure other means of disposal of sewage sludge presently dumped in the North sea.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: My right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has asked the water companies concerned to submit to him by the end of November their detailed plans and programmes of work phasing out disposal of sludge to sea. The main disposal options are to agricultural land, landfill and incineration.

Single People (Accommodation)

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he intends to take to ensure the provision of adequate single persons' accommodation in both the public and private rented sectors at prices which young single persons can afford.

Mr. Michael Spicer: We have taken a number of measures that will help young single people find accommodation including, in particular, the deregulation of new lettings in the private rented sector. Allocation of subsidised rented housing is mainly a matter for local authorities and housing associations; local authorities' duties under the homelessness legislation cover vulnerable single people; and we have recently announced a special programme, costing £100 million over four years, to help people sleeping rough in London.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what studies have been carried out by his Department into single persons' accommodation needs.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Department has published four reports on single persons' accommodation needs. These are:

Housing Single People 1: how they live at present. Design Bulletin 23, HMSO 1790.

Housing Single People 2: A design guide with a description of a scheme at Leicester. Design Bulletin 29, HMSO 1974.

Housing Single People 3: an appraisal of a purpose built scheme. Design bulletin 33, HMSO 1979.

Housing Initiatives for Single People of Working Age. DoE, 1982.

The Department will shortly let a research contract on single homeless people including their accommodation needs and preferences.

Mortgage Arrears

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment if he will take steps to require lo authorities, building societies and other mortgage lend to submit regular returns of the number of borrowers arrears with their payments and the number of proper repossessed.

Mr. Key: Local authorities already make returns to Department of their mortgage arrears and possessio Building societies make returns on arrears and possessi to the Building Societies Commission. In addition, Council of Mortgage Lenders has collected data on arre and possessions from a number of major mortg lenders. In view of the information already provided lenders, I do not consider it appropriate for Department of the Environment to require returns fr private sector lenders.

Housing and Independent Living

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment if his Department was represented at housing and independent living'conference organised Shelter, the King's Fund community development liv team, the British Council of Organisations of Disab People and the living options project on 12 and November; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer *[holding answer 16 Novem 1990]:* No.

WALES

European Court

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wa what policy considerations led him to send a member of legal department to observe the preliminary hearing of Leybucht bay case in the European Court of Justice Luxembourg on 16 October.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I refer the hon. Gentleman to reply given to him by my hon. Friend the Under-Secreta of State for the Environment on 19 November, at colum *41-42*. A member of the Welsh Office's legal divisi attended because of the relevance of the issues to We Office circular 52/87 "Nature Conservation".

Mr. Rod Richards

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales on what basis the salary to be paid to Mr. Rod Richar his personal ministerial adviser, has been calculated;

(2) what salary will be paid to Mr. Rod Richards as personal ministerial adviser.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I refer the hon. Gentleman to reply given to him on 19 November by my hon. Friend Paymaster General and to the reply my right hon. Frie gave on 13 November to the hon. Member for Cardi South and Penarth (Mr. Michael).

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wal further to his reply of 13 November, *Official Repo* column *106*, if he will give specific details of the knowled and experience of Mr. Rod Richards in respect of private sector which will be relevant to his work as spec adviser.

Sir Wyn Roberts: My right hon. Friend has nothing to add to the answer he gave the hon. Gentleman on 13 November.

Civil Defence

Mr. Bill Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many civil servants are currently employed *(a)* full time and *(b)* part time by his Department on civil defence; what the total costs of employing staff on civil defence duties were in 1989-90; what the total costs of employing staff on civil defence duties are expected to be in 1990-91; and whether he has any plans for these staff to be transferred to work on other duties.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The Department has no full-time or part-time staff engaged exclusively on civil defence, but such work is estimated to account for the equivalent of six full-time posts across the Department as a whole. The total cost was £156,000 in 1989-90 and is estimated to be £161,000 in 1990-91.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary announced on 16 October 1990 that he had initiated a review of the options for the future of civil defence arrangements in the light of east-west relations. Future levels of expenditure on civil defence will depend on the outcome of that review.

Music Teachers

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many peripatetic music teachers are currently employed by each local education authority in Wales; and what is the average amount of instrument tuition time per week offered by schools in each local education authority.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Information on the number of peripatetic music teachers and the amount of tuition time is not collected centrally.

Junior Doctors

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what progress has been made in negotiations on proposals for a reduction in hours worked by junior doctors in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: The Department is represented on the working group established by my hon. Friend the Minister for Health which is currently engaged on a detailed examination of the issues involved. A considerable amount of ground has already been covered and all parties are aiming to reach broad agreement in principle on specific changes by the end of the year.

Self-governing Hospitals

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the latest position in respect of hospitals becoming self-governing in Wales.

Mr. Grist: Pembrokeshire district health authority has submitted an expression of interest in applying for NHS trust status which is currently under consideration.

Toxic Waste

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will state for the last available year *(a)* the amount of toxic waste imported through Welsh ports in total, and by port and *(b)* the country of origin and destination of toxic waste imports by port, together with the nature of toxic waste in each case.

Mr. Grist: The information for the year to 31 March 1990 is shown in the following table.

Imports of Toxic Waste

Port	*Country of Origin*	*Destination*	*Type of Waste*	*Tonnes*
Holyhead	Ireland	Cheshire CC	Sodium sulphide/sulphate	36
			Sodium hydroxide	18
		Greater Manchester	Cyanoacrylate residue	47
			Glycerine waste	21
			Glycolmethacrylate scrap	24
		Torfaen BC	Miscellaneous waste	10
			Total	156
Newport	Austria	Torfaen BC	PCB/Transformers Carcass	53
	Germany	Torfaen BC	Miscellaneous chemical waste	69
			Pesticides	77
	Ireland	East Sussex CC	Nerol (Toluene waste)	48
		Greater Manchester	Iron hydroxide/oxides	177
		Hampshire CC	Organic waste (mix)	125
		Torfaen BC	Chlorinated solvents	5
			Inorganic waste	2
			Liners (cont; toxic waste)	8
			Miscellaneous waste	8
			Miscellaneous chemical waste	7
			Organic waste (mix)	68
			Polychloro Biphenyl (PCB)	17
			Pharmaceutical waste	21
	Spain	Nottinghamshire	PCB	22
		Torfaen BC	PCB contaminated material	21
			PCB/transformers carcass	195
	Switzerland	Greater Manchester	Aluminium Hydroxide/oxide	6
			Battery waste	23

Port	Country of Origin	Destination	Type of Waste	Tonnes
			Calcium hydroxide	7
			Carbon/charcoal waste	1
			Distillation residue	38
			Inorganic waste	9
			Organic waste (mix)	5
			Paint waste	15
			Sodium Chloride	91
		Torfaen BC	Organic acids	44
			Organic waste (mix)	1
			PCB	171
			PVC waste	12
				1,346
Swansea	Greece	Torfaen BC	PCB	5
			Grand Total	1,507

Soundproofing, Skewen

Mr. John Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consideration he has given to representations from householders in Skewen about the proposals for window soundproofing from the current motorway development.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I have given the representations careful consideration and will be writing shortly to the right hon. and learned Gentleman in response to his recent correspondence.

Waiting Lists, West Glamorgan

Mr. John Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what are the current waiting lists to see national health service consultants in the West Glamorgan area for first appointments;

(2) what are the present waiting lists for hospital admissions in the West Glamorgan area.

Mr. Grist: The information requested, which relates to 31 March 1990, is as follows:

	Number waiting
First out-patient appointment	14,462
Hospital in-patient admission	6,949

Residential and Nursing Homes (Agents)

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will take measures to stop touting for business on health authority property by agents for residential and nursing homes.

Mr. Grist: This is a matter for the district health authority, which deplores the action reported to have taken place in Maelor hospital, Wrexham, by representatives of private nursing homes. I am assured that the district health authority is taking appropriate steps to ensure that incidents of this kind do not occur again.

Disabled Staff

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what were the percentages of disabled staff employed in his Department in each of the past 10 years.

Mr. Grist: The information is as follows:

	Percentage
1980	2·3
1981	2·3
1982	2·3
1983	2·1
1984	1·8
1985	1·4
1986	1·5
1987	1·4
1988	1·3
1989	1·1
1990	1·4

Retail Sales

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has on retail sales in Wales and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The latest provisional information for 1988, previously unpublished, appears in the following table:

Wales

	Retail outlets (number)[2]	*Turnover (£ million)*[1]
Food retailer	6,711	2,000
Drink, confectionery and tobacco retailers	3,379	529
Clothing, footwear and leather goods retailers	2,891	411
Household goods retailers	3,357	825
Other non-food businesses	1,787	339
Mixed retail businesses	452	567
Hire and repair businesses	240	65

Source: CSO.

[1] Inclusive of VAT.

[2] The figures in this table include retail outlets and retail turnover of non-retail businesses.

Teacher Vacancies

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 16 November to the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside on teacher vacancies, what was the definition of teacher vacancy used in each survey.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The advice given to local education authorities on the definition of a teacher vacancy for the January survey was:

"Returns are only required in respect of current vacancies (at 18 January 1990) for full-time permanent appointments or full-time appointments for at least one term's duration which

have been advertised but not filled. Resignations which have occurred too recently for the vacancy to have been advertised should not be included in the return. A post which has been filled by a temporary appointment pending the finding of a more permanent appointee should be regarded as a vacancy for this purpose but a post which is filled by an appointee whom it is desired to replace by somebody more suitably qualified should not be regarded as a vacancy for that reason alone."

For the September survey LEAs were asked for information on vacancies for full-time permanent appointments or full-time appointments of at least one term's duration which have been externally advertised. LEAs were told that a post which had been filled by a temporary appointment of a term or more should be regarded as filled for this purpose, even if a permanent appointee is still actively being sought. Posts which there was no intention to fill in September 1990 were to be excluded.

Bathing Waters

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will announce the results of the 1990 survey of bathing water quality in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) on 14 November by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment and to the press notice, No. 638, issued on the same day. This included a list of Welsh bathing waters and indicated which had complied in 1990 with the coliform parameters set in the EC directive. A copy of the press notice was placed in the Library.

Roads

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales on what date the Welsh Office publication, "Roads in Wales: Progress and Plans for the 1990s", was first published; and if there were any changes, amendments, additions or deletions to this programme between that date and 31 October.

Sir Wyn Roberts: "Roads in Wales: Progress and Plans for the 1990s" was published in April 1989. Since then the following schemes have been added to the programme:

A5	Holyhead improvement
A5	Cefni Bridge—Llanfair PG
A5	Stanley Embankment—Cefni Bridge
A470	Blaenau Ffestiniog—Betws y Coed improvements
A487	Penygroes—Llanllyfni bypass
A550	Woodbank—Deeside Park (joint DTp/WO scheme)

Information on these schemes and updated information on the schemes listed in "Roads in Wales" will be included in a supplement to be published in the new year.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Broadcasting (Direct Feed)

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Lord President of the Council what representations he has received from commercial companies requesting a direct feed of the House proceedings subscriber service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: I know of no such recent representations either to me or to my predecessor. Under the present arrangements, organisations wishing to take a clean feed from the Chamber must first approach House of Commons Broadcasting Unit Ltd., the company formed by the main broadcasters which has been licensed by the House to produce and distribute the signal. Those wishing to take coverage of Select or Standing Committees apply to Commons Committee Television, the company contracted for that purpose by the broadcasters. In either case the Select Committee on Broadcasting stands ready to arbitrate in any possible dispute over the terms on which access is granted to the signals. So far the Committee's intervention has not been required. If however, my hon. Friend has a particular case in mind, perhaps he would let me know.

HEALTH

Young Offenders

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will make a statement on funding arrangements for secure units for young offenders;

(2) how many secure units for young offenders are funded directly by his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: There are currently 33 approved secure units run by local authorities and two secure youth treatment centres run direct by the Department of Health. All these facilities are available for children in care who meet the admissions criteria. (Some will be offenders or alleged offenders). The costs of these placements are met by the placing authority. Certain children who have been convicted of grave crimes under section 53 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1933 may also be placed in these facilities on behalf of the Home Office by the Department of Health. The cost of these placements is borne by central Government. In addition, grants may be made by the Department of Health to local authorities towards the capital costs of providing such accommodation.

Ring-fenced Funding

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he has any plans to issue guidance to local authorities on the distribution of moneys to local authorities which are ring-fenced specifically for drug, alcohol and mental health projects under the National Health Service and Community Care Act;

(2) if moneys ring-fenced specifically for funding drug, alcohol and mental health projects under the National Health Service and Community Care Act are awarded to local authorities on the basis of existing services;

(3) if he will take steps to ensure that local authorities pass on to existing drug, alcohol and mental health projects moneys ring-fenced for those purposes under the provisions of the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990.

Mr. Dorrell: Guidance on the alcohol and drugs services specific grant was issued last week, and on the mental illness specific grant in September (circulars LAC(90)11 and LAC(90)10 respectively, copies of which are available in the Library).

Gulf Forces (Injuries)

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) which hospitals in the West Midlands regional health authority area have been asked to prepare contingency plans for possible receipt of injured service personnel from the Gulf; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what contingency plans are being studied to utilise the specialist units at the Queen Victoria hospital, East Grinstead, in the event of hostilities in the Gulf; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas) on 16 November at column *248*. In drawing up their contingency plans, regional health authorities are expected to take account of the services that could be made available by both general and specialist units.

Salmonellosis and Listeriosis

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many deaths occurred from *(a)* salmonellosis and *(b)* listeriosis in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 12 November 1990]:* The number of deaths registered in England and Wales in 1989 with salmonella[1] as the underlying cause of death was 61.

In the same period 16 deaths were registered with listeria[2] as the underlying cause. In addition, a further 14 deaths of those aged under 28 days—for which no underlying cause is assigned—contained a mention on the certificate of listeria including congenital or maternal listeria.

[1] International Classification of Diseases (ICD) 9th revision code 003.

[2] ICD 027.0, 771.2 (part), 655.4 (part).

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Aid Target

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when overseas aid will reach the United Nations aid target of 0·7 per cent. of gross national product.

Mrs. Chalker: The Government have accepted the UN target for official development assistance of 0·7 per cent. of GNP in principle but, like previous Administrations and many other donors, have not set a timetable to achieve it. Progress towards it must depend upon economic circumstances and other calls on Government resources.

Aid Programme

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the level of the aid programme in real terms in 1979 and in the latest available year.

Mrs. Chalker: In 1989 gross public expenditure on aid was £1,788 million compared with £1,940 million in 1979 at 1989 prices.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Anti-Jewish Literature

Mr. Janner: To ask the Attorney-General if he w the criteria used to assess whether the public inte served by the prosecution of those alleged to published or distributed anti-Jewish literature.

The Attorney-General: An assessment concerni public interest is relevant only whenever it is cons that there is a realistic prospect of securing a convict an offence.

The general considerations applicable to the interest aspect of the decision whether to prosecute out at paragraphs 7 to 9 of the code for prosecutors. This guidance is necessarily in genera because individual cases have to be considered o own merits. Factors likely to be of particular releva cases of the nature referred to in the hon. and l Member's question are the prevalence of the condu its seriousness. In this context the Director of Prosecutions and I have made plain our view t regard the publication and distribution of material offends against the provisions of part III of the Order Act 1986 as a serious matter.

The criteria set out in the code are founded observations of the right hon. and noble Lord Shawcross, a former Attorney-General, which are in the code, who said that regard must be had to "the effect which the prosecution, successful or unsu as the case may be, would have upon public morale and and with any other considerations affecting public

"Holocaust Myths"

Mr. Janner: To ask the Attorney-General consideration has been given by the Director of Prosecutions to initiating proceedings in respect publication entitled "Holocaust Myths", distribu the Association of British Ex-Servicemen.

The Attorney-General: A police report has referred to the Director of Public Prosecutions conc a leaflet entitled "Question: how long can th perpetrate the holocaust myth" and other publi allegedly distributed by the Association of Ex-Servicemen.

The police have been requested to forward evidence resulting from their inquiries and on rec this a decision will be taken concerning the institu proceedings.

PRIME MINISTER

Homelessness

Q8. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Prime Minister wha she has to meet representatives of the homeless in L

The Prime Minister: I have no such plans. M hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Enviro and his ministerial colleagues have regular meetin voluntary groups working with the homeless, an local authorities in London and their associations

Forestry

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Prime Minister if she will set out the responsibility for forestry of each of the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food Secretary of State for Wales, Secretary of State for Scotland and Secretary of State for Northern Ireland; and when the respective responsibilities were last changed.

The Prime Minister: The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, the Secretary of State for Wales and the Secretary of State for Scotland have individual territorial responsibility for forestry matters in England, Wales and Scotland respectively. They act jointly on forestry policy questions affecting Great Britain as a whole, with the Secretary of State for Scotland taking the lead. The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland has responsibility for all forestry questions in Northern Ireland.

These arrangements are of long standing and were last changed in 1979 when the Secretary of State for Scotland assumed lead responsibility for policy questions in Great Britain.

Conservative Leadership Contest

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Prime Minister what steps were taken to ensure that no member of her press department was involved in briefing the media on the Conservative leadership contest; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: My press office is aware of its responsibilities.

Mr. Charles Powell

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Prime Minister (1) if she will set out the full duties carried out by Mr. Charles Powell;

(2) how long Mr. Charles Powell has been employed in her office; and how long she intends him to be employed in his current position.

The Prime Minister: Mr. Powell serves as my private secretary for foreign affairs and will serve in my office until it is time for him to leave.

Correspondence

Mr. Parry: To ask the Prime Minister if she will place in the Library a copy of the letter received from the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Baghdad and a copy of her reply; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 20 November 1990]:* No. It is not my normal practice to do so.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

British Hostages (Lebanon)

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent initiatives have been taken by the Government to ensure the release of the British hostages held in the Lebanon.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. Friend the then Minister of State's answer to him of 15 October, Vol. 177, c. *752*.

Single European Act

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on what date or dates and on what occasions a representative of the Crown signed the Single European Act treaty; and who was the representative.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Single European Act treaty was signed at plenipotentiary meetings in Luxembourg on 17 February 1986 and in The Hague on 28 February 1986. On both occasions the Government were represented by my right hon. Friend the Member for Wallasey (Mrs. Chalker), the then Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Baltic States

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to support the request by the three Baltic states to be given observer status at the forthcoming CSCE conference in Paris.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We welcomed the decision of the French Government to invite representatives of the Baltic states to attend the CSCE summit as "distinguished guests". We look forward to a time when it will be possible for the Baltic states to participate in the CSCE process as full members. However, membership and observer status are open only to states internationally recognised as such. The Baltic states are not recognised as independent states.

Soviet Union

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if his Department intends to take steps to provide any urgent economic assistance for the Soviet Union to counteract shortages of food and consumer goods; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We are already offering the Soviet Union assistance in introducing economic reform, in particular through our know-how fund. We have not yet received a specific request for humanitarian assistance from the Soviet Union. We shall continue to pay very close attention to the Soviet Union's economic difficulties, and are sure that the EC would consider any justified request for humanitarian aid urgently and sympathetically.

Romania

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Government of Romania concerning claims that political prisoners, confined to mental institutions by the late President Ceausescu, have not yet been released.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We are aware of a recent television report to this effect, but the British embassy in Bucharest has not been able to provide further information. If the hon. Member will share with us any evidence he may have, we shall consider it with a view to taking up the matter with the Romanian authorities.

Iraq (Hostages)

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his Department's policy towards the sending of gifts by friends and relatives to hostages in Iraq.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We are in touch with the British Red Cross Society, which hopes to arrange for Red Cross parcels to be sent by families in the United Kingdom to the detainees in Iraq. Our embassy in Baghdad has been sending local comfort parcels to detainees in Iraq and these are beginning to get through. The United Kingdom has suspended postal services to Iraq in order to implement sanctions imposed by UN Security Council resolution 661.

SCOTLAND

Civil Defence

Mr. Bill Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many civil servants are currently employed *(a)* full time and *(b)* part time by his Department on civil defence; what the total costs of employing staff on civil defence duties were in 1989-90; what the total costs of employing staff on civil defence duties are expected to be in 1990-91; and whether he has any plans for these staff to be transferred to work on other duties.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Information on manpower and employment costs is set out in the table:

	Numbers and costs
Number of full-time staff employed on 16 November 1990	15
Number of part-time staff employed on 16 November 1990	16
Total cost 1989-90	£316,974
Estimated total cost 1990-91	£302,848

The staff shown as part time undertake civ duties as part of their wider emergency responsibilities. In addition some staff in the Office directorate of telecommunications are involved in emergency planning work.

My right hon. and learned Friend together Home Secretary announced on 16 October a rev options for the future of civil defence arrangeme light of east-west relations. Future levels of exper civil defence will depend on the outcome of th

Conservation

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of Scotland whether his proposal to create a Scottis Heritage Agency includes a proposal to house th Nature Conservancy Council and Co Commission for Scotland in a single hea building.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Governm that there should be one headquarters at se paragraph 23 of the consultation paper "S Natural Heritage: The Way Ahead".

Housing

Mr. Maxton: To ask the Secretary of State fo how many new dwellings were started by each d islands council in each year since 1979 to available date.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The informa out in the table:

New dwellings started by local authority 1979 to June 1990

Area	*Year*										
	1979	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*19*
Borders											
Berwickshire	27	2	—	—	15	26	24	15	33	—	
Ettrick and Lauderdale	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	
Roxburgh	16	7	52	34	42	12	—	8	50	—	
Tweeddale	48	8	10	—	—	—	[illegible]	12	44	4	
Central											
Clackmannan	64	—	—	—	1	23	30	—	18	17	
Falkirk	51	24	68	40	39	144	40	95	17	—	
Stirling	126	70	[illegible]	37	2	10	6	—	—	—	
Dumfries and Galloway											
Annandale and Eskdale	202	118	94	173	178	4	48	46	16	51	
Nithsdale	61	63	28	28	—	68	74	76	58	88	
Stewartry	42	7	63	65	64	—	62	6	16	46	
Wigtown	93	22	68	64	78	28	—	46	14	26	
Fife											
Dunfermline	101	18	83	101	14	24	190	56	133	36	
Kirkcaldy	56	56	61	13	121	73	85	98	221	86	
North East Fife	71	142	35	118	74	43	22	67	18	19	
Grampian											
Aberdeen	440	243	63	121	75	103	81	91	185	35	
Banff and Buchan	156	300	110	155	127	129	52	45	91	65	
Gordon	—	22	99	146	129	72	61	171	47	145	
Kincardine and Deeside	—	10	70	54	56	38	153	43	140	19	
Moray	527	211	96	211	100	47	76	71	161	78	
Highland											
Badenoch and Strathspey	28	41	54	38	16	16	—	13	—	12	
Caithness	74	30	—	14	71	—	17	39	24	27	

Area	Year 1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990 Jan-June
Inverness	113	38	68	56	80	89	129	34	65	71	75	30
Lochaber	90	—	18	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Nairn	—	—	—	—	—	23	21	6	16	28	—	20
Ross and Cromarty	81	79	23	35	69	25	26	43	39	28	29	[1]9
Skye and Lochalsh	25	9	13	—	16	8	52	12	8	61	4	14
Sutherland	26	9	12	34	11	29	8	35	34	48	28	[1]
Lothian												
East Lothian	31	—	17	137	21	95	39	40	57	68	—	25
Edinburgh	35	110	—	—	—	—	—	115	107	154	—	—
Midlothian	24	—	—	—	—	7	—	14	—	12	—	9
West Lothian	—	—	—	2	—	—	—	—	91	—	—	—
Strathclyde												
Argyll and Bute	67	47	58	—	94	—	—	73	41	—	26	10
Bearsden and Milngavie	76	—	56	12	—	16	—	35	6	—	6	—
Clydebank	106	23	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Clydesdale	22	34	33	20	14	4	29	1	24	11	38	1
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	32	3	—	16	8	—	—	6	—	—	—	—
Cumnock and Doon Valley	77	4	8	—	12	2	—	6	4	—	—	—
Cunninghame	54	60	29	74	58	47	48	22	23	31	29	[1]
Dumbarton	8	—	—	—	—	—	6	18	8	18	—	—
East Kilbride	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Eastwood	—	3	14	—	36	40	1	14	58	—	35	—
Glasgow	777	227	—	94	118	—	49	—	—	—	—	—
Hamilton	131	22	100	116	52	83	—	—	43	18	—	—
Inverclyde	12	—	26	—	—	64	—	—	—	—	37	—
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	40	—	—	12	21	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Kyle and Carrick	127	17	96	20	64	34	59	11	36	13	30	—
Monklands	21	32	—	48	30	—	—	—	51	5	—	[1]
Motherwell	209	26	42	8	—	—	36	—	—	—	—	—
Renfrew	89	212	71	148	—	22	10	64	27	—	—	—
Strathkelvin	—	40	—	—	19	—	24	13	—	—	—	—
Tayside												
Angus	13	—	6	40	46	29	83	48	65	53	50	12
Dundee	83	82	84	49	8	56	3	4	1	—	5	[1]
Perth and Kinross	65	114	37	118	75	174	—	—	—	—	—	—
Islands Councils												
Orkney Islands	17	28	—	43	8	14	4	11	37	14	38	15
Shetland Islands	136	66	30	49	23	30	4	36	4	36	[1]24	[1]
Western Isles	88	91	28	42	56	4	41	12	14	10	2	—

[1] Returns are incomplete.

Dyslexia

Mr. Robert Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if his Department accepts dyslexia as a condition requiring specialist education; which regional education departments recognise dyslexia as a condition requiring specialist education; which regional education departments provide in-house specialised education for dyslexic children; which regional education departments send children to private schools specialising in education for dyslexic children; and which specialist private schools are registered with his Department as establishments which provide specialist dyslexic education.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The term dyslexia denotes specific learning difficulties which may cause a child to have special educational needs. It is the responsibility of education authorities to provide for such needs, which they may do in mainstream schools, special units or special schools, including independent special schools. The other information requested is not available.

Property Law

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he anticipates receiving the report of the Scottish Law Commission following its review of property law in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The preparation of the Scottish Law Commission's report on land tenure reform will be preceded during the course of 1991 by a discussion paper and subsequent public consultation.

Student Unions

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) on what grounds the press release on student unions issued by his Department on Friday 16 November was withdrawn;

(2) who instructed the withdrawal of the press release on student unions issued by his Department on Friday 16 November;

(3) what were the differences between the press releases on student unions issued on Friday 16 November and Sunday 18 November.

Mr. Rifkind: A news release about consultation on student unions, the text of which was still under

consideration, was issued prematurely on Friday 16 November. It was withdrawn under established procedure as soon as the error became apparent, and the final version was issued on Sunday 18 November.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he intends to introduce legislation following the consultation on student unions.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans to do so.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will make available the responses to his first series of consultations about student unions in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: A copy of the publication "Student Union Survey: Analysis" was placed in the House Library last year.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether the consultation proposed on student unions includes discussion on freedom of speech.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The scope of the proposed consultation has yet to be decided.

Public Sector Tenants (Property Purchases)

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland which housing authorities and housing associations operate a Government-assisted financial incentive scheme to encourage tenants to buy homes in the private sector in order to release rented accommodation for other people; and if he will give details of any such schemes and the legislation under which they operate.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Section 66 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1988 makes provision for local authorities to draw up schemes, for the approval of my right hon. and learned Friend, to offer payments to assist tenants to obtain accommodation in the private sector. This releases council housing for letting to homeless or others in housing need. There is no requirement on local authorities to draw up such schemes.

Bearsden and Milngavie district council is the first local authority in Scotland to receive approval to operate a cash incentive scheme. The council has allocated £100,000 towards the scheme which commenced on 1 September 1990 and will offer qualifying tenants up to £10,000 towards the purchase of alternative property. A further three authorities have submitted proposals to operate such schemes and these are currently under consideration.

The tenants' incentive scheme available to housing associations is operated by Scottish Homes under section 2(2) of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1988. I have asked the chairman of Scottish Homes to write direct to the hon. Member giving details of the scheme.

DEFENCE

NATO

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the United Kingdom's involvement in NATO's guerrilla resistance organisation; and whether he has any plans to launch an investigation into its operations along the lines of those set up by the Belgian and Italian Governments.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is not the Go practice to comment on such questions.

The Gulf

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary Defence what representations he has had, Members and others, about delays in despatch Her Majesty's forces in the Gulf; and if he statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No formal represent been received from hon. Members or others a in despatching mail to Her Majesty's forces i Under the forces postal concessionary scheme packets are automatically sent by air, curren within about five days. Under the same scheme transported by air on a fill-up basis, curren within about 10 days.

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State what facilities will be provided for allied troo Arabia to celebrate Christmas; and if he is s religious practices can be observed by the troo in that country.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Arrangements are bei ensure that our forces will be able to celebrat and the new year properly, subject to the need military preparedness. Arrangements are alwa the pastoral and spiritual support of Unite forces.

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State if he will make a statement on the further de British forces to the Gulf.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer my hon. Fr statement made by my right hon. Friend tod

Tornado

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State fo he will make a statement on the present situa progress towards the weapons enhancement pr Tornado F3.

Mr. Alan Clark: A feasibility study into weapons system upgrade for the Tornado F undertaken. This study is now under conside

Ulster Defence Regiment

Mr. Maginnis: To ask the Secretary o Defence what proposals are in hand to close Defence Regiment company bases; and what tion he has given to the social implicatio proposals.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The requirement for bases in Northern Ireland is kept under revie that resources are used to the best effect in deal terrorist threat. Before any decision is reached a particular base all relevant factors are account.

Territorial Army

Mr. John Morris: To ask the Secretary Defence what proposals have been made re amalgamation of the Territorial Army district

Wales with the north-west of England, and who he will consult before further consideration is given to this proposal.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We have no plans to reorganise the Territorial Army regions. Regarding the review of the United Kingdom land forces district structure, I refer the right hon. and learned Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey) on 20 November at column *80*.

Aldershot Military Hospital

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the total cost of relocating the staff and facilities from the Aldershot military hospital to the field hospital at Jubayl in Saudi Arabia; and how many *(a)* surgeons and *(b)* anaesthetists have been relocated.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Information on the costs of deploying staff and facilities from the Cambridge military hospital Aldershot to the field hospital at Jubayl in Saudi Arabia is not currently available. Five surgeons and five anaesthetists from the Cambridge military hospital Aldershot have been deployed to Jubayl.

Air-to-Surface Missile

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to decide between the various options for the tactical air-to-surface missile.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Our consideration of the various options is continuing. The House will be informed as soon as a decision is taken.

Service Discipline

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will place in the Library copies of the most recently published leaflets which each of the three services makes available to those charged under the Service Discipline Acts.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Copies of the most recently published leaflets which each of the three services makes available to those charged under the Service Discipline Acts have been placed in the Library of the House.

Training

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information is made available to service personnel who are due to leave the services regarding training opportunities available from non-Ministry of Defence organisations.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Information about pre-release training in the form of external courses sponsored by the Ministry of Defence and attachments to outside organisations is available for resettlement officers; the service resettlement bulletins published about six times a year; a Defence Council instruction issued each year, giving details of the programme of briefings and courses for the following 12 months; and other internal newsletters and publications. Additionally a range of post-release training options is available to former service personnel, including Government-sponsored courses. Information about these is included in the Training Agency booklet "Employment Training for Ex-Regulars", copies of which are held by resettlement officers, who are responsible for making personnel aware of its contents. Finally, all personnel attending their final resettlement interview receive copies of the booklet "Employment in Civilian Life" and officers also receive a booklet entitled "Leaving the Services". These booklets, which are both published by the Employment Service, include chapters on occupational training.

Ethnic Minorities

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps have been taken in the last year to include a more positive image of ethnic minorities in recruitment advertising to the services.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We have included more photographs of ethnic minority personnel in a wider diversity of circumstances in our recruitment advertising and given greater prominence to the fact that the armed forces are equal opportunity employers under the terms of the Race Relations Act.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what additional training has been given in the last year to recruitment officers to increase the number of applicants from ethnic minorities into the services.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: As part of the wide range of measures now being taken to attract more recruits from the ethnic minorities, the Army and RAF have in the course of this year introduced race relations and cultural awareness into the training syllabus for their recruiting staff. The Navy will introduce similar training in the new year.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Single European Market

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what initiatives his Department is following to ensure that Northern Ireland industry is able to respond to the completion of the single European market in 1992.

Mr. Needham: The Department has a whole series of initiatives to assist Northern Ireland businesses compete in the single market.

Security

Mr. A. Cecil Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what further steps he proposes to improve the security situation in north Belfast.

Mr. Cope: The Secretary of State and I have regular and frequent meetings with our security advisers to discuss security not only in north Belfast but in Northern Ireland as a whole. New security measures are constantly being explored and where they are considered practical they are implemented.

Flags

20. **Mr. John D. Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many persons have received damages arising from the distress caused by *(a)* the flying

of the Union flag at their place of work and *(b)* the flying of the Southern Irish tricolour at their place of work in each of the past three years.

Mr. Cope: I am not aware of any individual having received damages or claiming damages from distress as a result of flag flying at his workplace.

Planning

21. **Mr. Clifford Forsythe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans he has to restore planning decisions to democratically elected representatives on district councils.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Government have no plans at present to restore responsibility for planning decisions to district councils. However, we remain ready to consider any proposals for transferring political power, authority and responsibility to locally elected representatives in Northern Ireland on a basis which would be likely to prove widely acceptable.

Political Development

22. **Mr. Maclennan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the progress of his consultations on political development.

Mr. Brooke: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Beverley (Mr. Cran).

Colin Wallace

23. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he will make it his policy to provide all information required by the Select Committee on Defence in the carrying out of its inquiries into the affairs of Colin Wallace.

Mr. Cope: We would naturally give all appropriate assistance to the Committee in response to any inquiries which it may make in connection with Colin Wallace.

Students

24. **Mr. Beggs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many Northern Ireland students were successful in obtaining places in *(a)* Queen's university and *(b)* the university of Ulster for the academic courses commencing 1990; and how many unsuccessful applicants have been accepted into courses in universities, polytechnics and so on, in Great Britain commencing in the current year.

Dr. Mawhinney: Provisional figures for the 1990-91 academic year show that the number of Northern Ireland students who obtained places in Northern Ireland universities was as follows:

	number
Queen's University	3,600
University of Ulster	4,944

Information is not available on the destinations of applicants who were unsuccessful in gaining a place in Northern Ireland universities.

Armagh UDR

25. **Mr. Trimble:** To ask the Secr Northern Ireland whether he has receiv tions in respect of the four Armag Regiment men.

Mr. Cope: Yes.

EMPLOYMENT

Youth Training Sche

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secr Employment if he will provide details scheme ethnic monitoring statistics for scheme for each year since 1984 until t in the following areas: Manchester C East and Manchester North.

Mr. Jackson: The information r provided only at disproportionate cos

Offshore Oil Installati

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secr Employment what discussions he h director-general of the Health and Safe organisational changes necessary to transfer of responsibility for offshor what conclusions were reached; and w resources will now be made available year for which plans have been made.

Mr. Forth: I refer the hon. Member t right hon. Friend the Secretary of Stat to the House on 12 November, regard responsibilities for offshore oil installa and Safety Executive (HSE). The comm confirmed its acceptance of the transfe work is now proceeding in my Departments of Energy and Transport ensure that the transfer is completed speedily as possible. No detailed decis made on the question of appropriate re right hon. Friend assured the House offshore safety will not be sacrificed resources.

Foreign Domestic Serv

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Se Employment what representations he the treatment of foreign domestic serva United Kingdom; and if he will make

Mr. Forth: Ministers in both this D Home Office have received representa the concern that reports of abuse cau The Home Office carried out a review the exceptional arrangements outsid rules and the work permit scheme unde servant who has worked abroad for comes to the United Kingdom can be a him. The outcome of this review another place by my noble Friend Lord a question from Lord Hylton on 2 1449-50. It is hoped that the new ar implemented soon.

Equal Opportunities

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) what steps he is taking to clarify employment rights and employment-related benefits to women who work between the ages of 60 and 65 years in view of the recent settlement by Barclays bank; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what assessment he has made of the implications for women in work between the ages of 60 and 65 years and their employers in view of the recent settlement by Barclays bank; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: The Barclays bank case related to dismissal.

The Sex Discrimination Act 1975, as amended by the Sex Discrimination Act 1986, makes it unlawful for employers to set different compulsory retirement ages for men and women in comparable positions. It is for the courts to interpret the law as it applies to the facts of a particular case and we do not consider that any action is called for.

Subject to the law, terms and conditions of employment, including retirement age, are matters for agreement between employers and employees.

Disabled People

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what were the percentages of disabled staff employed in *(a)* his Department and *(b)* other Government Departments in each of the past 10 years.

Mr. Jackson: The percentages of registered disabled staff in the civil service are set out in the table for the years for which records are available. In 1990 the Department of Employment group employed 3·2 per cent. registered disabled. The Office of the Minister for the Civil Service publishes these figures annually in "Independent" magazine, which is in the Library. Registration is voluntary and Departments employ people with disabilities who are not registered.

Table: Registered Disabled People in the Civil Service[1]
Percentage

	1986	1987	1988	1989
MAFF	1·2	1·3	1·3	1·4
Cabinet Office	1·1	1·0	0·8	1·0
Customs and Excise	1·4	1·3	1·2	1·6
MOD	1·0	1·0	0·9	1·0
DES	2·2	2·0	2·1	2·6
Employment Group	2·1	2·1	2·2	2·7
Energy	0·6	1·2	1·1	1·2
Environment[2]	—	—	—	1·0
ECGD	1·5	1·4	1·3	1·3
FCO	0·8	0·7	0·4	0·5
Health[2]	—	—	—	0·7
Home Office	0·5	0·4	0·4	0·3
DTI	1·5	1·2	1·2	1·2
Inland Revenue	1·5	1·5	1·5	1·5
Land Registry	2·4	2·4	2·8	2·7
LCD	1·4	1·4	1·1	1·3
DNS	3·1	2·9	2·7	3·0
OPCS	2·1	2·2	2·3	2·3
Ordnance Survey	1·1	1·0	0·9	0·9
ODA	1·1	1·2	1·3	1·2
PSA[2]	—	—	—	1·2
Public Record Office	3·8	3·3	2·7	1·9
Royal Mint	3·1	3·7	3·5	2·9
Scottish Office	1·7	1·7	1·4	1·4
Social Security[2]	—	—	—	1·5
Transport[2]	—	—	—	1·2
HMSO	1·3	1·7	1·8	
HM Treasury	1·3	1·3	1·4	
Welsh Office	1·6	1·4	1·3	
Total[3]	1·3	1·3	1·3	

[1] Part-time staff counted as half units.
[2] The Department of Health and Social Security and Envir Group has recently been divided into separate depar Information for the new departments is only available for l
[3] Total includes a number of smaller departments and agen listed in the table.

Self-employment

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of Sta Employment what is his estimate of the total of self-employed in each of the past 10 years.

Mr. Forth: The information is given in the tabl

Self-employed persons in the United Kingdom

June	Number
1980	2,013,000
1981	2,119,000
1982	2,170,000
1983	2,221,000
1984	2,496,000
1985	2,610,000
1986	2,627,000
1987	2,860,000
1988	2,986,000
1989	3,240,000
1990	3,380,000

SOCIAL SECURITY

Income Support

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Security what the cost would be if the proposals maintenance of children were implemented but p solely dependent on benefit were allowed to keep *(b)* £10 or *(c)* £15 before income support was ded

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The estimated costs maintenance disregard in income support are in the

Amount of disregard (£)	Total cost (£ million)
5	70
10	130
15	180

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Security what changes he intends to introduce to in the levels of income support payable to 1 17-year-olds.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Benefit rates will be u from next April in the normal way. We are continu monitor the effects of the social security reforms make improvements where appropriate; for example July 1989 16 and 17-year-olds who have no option live independently have been entitled to the higher benefit normally paid to 18 to 24-year-olds.

Research into the operation of the income suppor for 16 and 17-year-olds has been commissioned results are expected around Easter 1991.

Pensions

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what action he is taking to change the calculation for payment of the basic state pension from relating it to prices to that of earnings; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: We have no plans to do so.

Redundancies

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many redundancies are expected to be created by computerisation and the consolidation of local offices into local management units.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: No compulsory redundancies will be needed as a result of the Department's computerisation programme (the operational strategy) provided staff co-operate in implementing the necessary personnel measures to achieve staff savings. Much of the reduction in staffing will be gained by natural wastage and, where this is not the case, the needs of staff will be taken into account as far as possible.

The management of the local office network is being restructured because changes in procedures as a result of the operational strategy and the setting up of the Contributions Agency meant that the existing offices no longer formed viable management units. There are no plans to reduce the number of outlets. This restructuring will result in a modest saving at managerial level. A voluntary redundancy scheme is in place for the staff.

Child Benefit

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the estimated cost of sending out questionnaires to recipients of child benefit as a result of the benefit changes recently announced; and to what categories of recipients the questionnaires were sent.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: To enable the increased amount of child benefit to be taken into account correctly in their assessment from uprating, letters will be sent, between 26 November and 1 March 1991, to all income support recipients, who are paid by the income support computer system, who receive child benefit. The cost of sending these out is about £150,000.

National Insurance

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the total number of people who have been paying the self-employed national insurance contribution during each of the past 10 years.

Mr. Scott: The United Kingdom figures of the number of individuals who paid class 2 (self-employed) national insurance contributions between April 1978 and April 1988 are set out in the table.

	Number[1] *(thousands)*	*Number*[2] *(thousands)*
1978-79	1,314	214
1979-80	1,376	232
1980-81	1,450	211
1981-82	1,479	218
1982-83	1,526	240
1983-84	1,594	251
1984-85	1,663	251
1985-86	1,732	261
1986-87	1,850	295
1987-88	1,959	336

[1] Who paid only Class 2 contributions during this year.
[2] Who paid a mixture of Class 2 and Class 1 contributions during the year.

Statutory Sick Pay

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the effects of the planned changes in the future employment of the disabled that will result from the passage of the Statutory Sick Pay Bill.

Mr. Scott: The provisions of the Statutory Sick Pay Bill relating to employers' reimbursement arrangements for SSP will have no direct effect on employees. We do not believe that they will lead to any change in the pattern of employment of people with disabilities. Other factors are of far greater importance in determining job opportunity for disabled people, which a wide variety of policies are designed to promote.

Disabled Staff

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the percentage of disabled staff employed in his Department in each of the past 10 years.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The figures for the Department of Social Security at June 1989 and June 1990 are as follows:

Year	*Percentage of registered disabled staff per cent.*
1989	1·53
1990	1·70

Separate figures are not held for this Department prior to June 1989. This does not include staff with disabilities who are not registered as disabled.

Cold Weather Payments

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he intends making any changes to the social fund cold weather payments scheme for the forthcoming winter.

Mr. Scott: I am pleased to tell my hon. Friend that yesterday, Wednesday 21 November, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State laid before the House the Social Fund Cold Weather Payments (General) Amendment Regulations.

The effect of these changes will be to better ensure that conditions in different local areas are properly reflected in the scheme. Copies of the regulations are available in the Vote Office.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Farmed Salmon

Mr. Amos: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has on the presence of dichlorvos in farmed salmon.

Mr. Maclean: Following a recent newspaper report that a sample of farmed salmon had been found to contain dichlorvos, the Department's food safety directorate has carried out a further survey of salmon steaks. Forty-three samples were purchased between 12 and 15 November from a variety of retail outlets in East Anglia and London. No dichlorvos was detected in any of the samples.

An earlier survey of 92 salmon samples for dichlorvos was carried out between 1987 and 1989. Again, no residues were detected.

Civil Defence

Mr. Bill Michie: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many civil servants are currently employed *(a)* full time and *(b)* part time by his Ministry on civil defence; what the total costs of employing staff on civil defence duties were in 1989-90; what the total costs of employing staff on civil defence duties are expected to be in 1990-91; and whether he has any plans for these staff to be transferred to work on other duties.

Mr. Curry: The number of man years allocated to civil defence work in the Department, including maintenance of the strategic food stockpile, was 55 in 1989-90 and cost £1·5 million. In 1990-91 the number of man years is expected to be 47 and the cost £1·3 million.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department announced on 16 October that he had initiated a review of the options for the future of civil defence arrangements and future levels of expenditure will depend on the outcome of that review.

Farm Incomes

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will give such figures as he has available for farm income by *(a)* farm type and *(b)* farm size for each of the last five years.

Mr. Curry: The most recent information on farm incomes for 1988-89 by type and size of farm is published in section 8 of "Agriculture in the United Kingdom: 1989" and in more detail in "Farm Incomes in the United Kingdom 1990 Edition". Similar information for previous years is contained in previous editions of these publications and in the annual review of agriculture White Papers. These publications are available in the Library of the House.

Drift Net Fishing

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list those countries which have banned drift net fishing in the Atlantic.

Mr. Curry: We are not aware of any country that has banned drift netting outright in the Atlantic. However, from information readily available several countries are known to have taken measures which restrict or prohibit drift netting in this area to some degree. These include Norway, Spain, South Africa, Japan, Taiwan, the USA and the UK. The international community is now addressing the issue of large-scale, oceanic drift netting in the light of a resolution adopted by the United Nations last year.

Salmon

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food why the review of the Salmon Act 1986, due in January, has not yet taken place.

Mr. Curry: While there is no requirement to review the Salmon Act 1986 as such, section 39 of that Act calls on Ministers to undertake a review of the salmon net fisheries off the north-east coast of England and eastern Scotland and to present a report to Parliament as soon as practicable after 6 November 1989. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and I hope to be ready to do this soon.

Salmonella

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is now his policy on the payment of compensation to owners of laying flocks slaughtered under the salmonella control regulations.

Mr. Gummer: This matter is currently under review and an announcement will be made as soon as possible.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 23 November 1990

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Welsh Students

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish the figures for the number of students in each university college in Wales who were normally resident in Wales for both 1989 and 1990; and if he will publish the figures in percentage form of the total number of students attending each college.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The numbers of students in academic year 1989-90 in each university college in Wales of Welsh domicile, and as expressed as percentages of the total numbers of students attending each college, are given in the table. The data cover all students whether full time, part time, undergraduate or postgraduate.

The numbers for 1990 are not yet available.

University of Wales—1989

	Total students all domiciles	*Welsh domicile*	*Percentage Welsh domicile*
Aberystwyth	3,929	1,099	28
Bangor	3,606	913	25
Cardiff	9,300	3,302	36
Lampeter	897	180	20
Swansea	5,725	1,677	29
UWCM	1,120	439	39
Total	24,577	7,610	31

Source: Universities Statistical Record.

State Education

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will show the total expenditure on state education in actual and 1989 prices in 1960, 1970, 1980 and 1989, showing the percentage increase in 1989 prices, and also the amount spent on teachers' salaries and related costs in each case in actual and percentage terms.

Mr. Eggar: Data for 1960 are not readily available. The available data for subsequent years on total United Kingdom education spending, and on spending on school teachers' salaries in England, are as follows:

	Total education spending			*Teachers' salaries*		
	Cash terms	*1989-90 prices*	*Increase*	*Cash terms*	*1989-90 prices*	*Increase*
	£ billion	*£ billion*	*Per cent.*	*£ billion*	*£ billion*	*Per cent.*
1970-71	2·6	16·5	—	0·6	4·1	—
1980-81	12·9	21·9	33	3·7	6·3	54
1988-89	22·0	23·4	7	6·6	7·0	11
1989-90	24·1	24·1	3	n.a.	n.a.	—

Notes:

1. The total education spending figures are drawn from the relevant Public Expenditure White Papers.
2. The figures for spending on teachers' salaries are drawn from local authority spending returns. Data for 1989-90 are not yet available. Spending on teachers' salaries includes on-cost such as superannuation. No account is taken of changes in teacher numbers over the period shown.
3. The "increase" column shows the increase in spending at 1989-90 prices over the previous year shown.
4. The figures at 1989-90 prices have been calculated using latest GDP deflators.

Teachers

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will state on the same basis as his reply of 12 November, *Official Report*, column *46*, the actual number of pupils being educated by local education authorities in 1960, 1970, 1980, 1989 and 1990, together with the pupil-teacher ratio in each case, based on actual numbers, showing also the change between 1970 and 1989 in actual and percentage terms.

Mr. Fallon: The information requested for local education authority-maintained nursery, primary and secondary schools is given in the table.

January each year	*Actual teacher numbers (thousands)*	*Actual pupil numbers (thousands)*	*Ratio of actual pupil numbers to actual teacher numbers*
1960[1]	—	—	—
1970	347·8	7,537·2	21·7
1980	455·7	8,275·5	18·2
1989	421·0	6,900·5	16·4
1990[2]	424·6	—	—

[1] Not readily available.
[2] Data on pupil numbers are not yet available.

Teacher numbers increased by 73,200, or 21 per cent., between 1970 and 1989. Pupil numbers decreased by 636,700 or 8 per cent. and the ratio of actual pupil numbers to actual teacher numbers also decreased by 24 per cent. over the same period.

Council for National Academic Awards

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to be in a position to respond on behalf of the Government to the conclusions reached by the report of the review of the Council for National Academic Awards.

Mr. Alan Howarth: I cannot yet say. The Government recognise the support for some change revealed by the consultations on the report's recommendations. However, the right for institutions to award their own degrees cannot be taken as an issue on its own. The report also raises important questions about which institutions should have this right, and about the nature of future quality assurance arrangements. We need to consider these further.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) if he will set out the criteria currently required of those who seek to qualify for Council for National Academic Awards status; and whether any changes are proposed in future;

(2) if he will make a statement as to how the estimated numbers likely to secure Council for National Academic Awards status as set out in paragraph 10.7 of his Department's review of the Council for National Academic Awards were arrived at;

(3) what representations he has received from those institutions which may be denied Council for National Academic Awards status as proposed by the conclusions of the committee reviewing the Council for National Academic Awards.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Any educational institution or training organisation may apply to the Council for National Academic Awards for validation of its courses. If successful it is granted "associated" status and may later seek "accredited" status. The departmental policy review of the CNAA recommended that associated status should be phased out over a period, and that associated institutions should either seek to become accredited or should look to other educational institutions to validate their courses. Around half the 80 responses to the review have been from institutions with associated status, or from bodies whose membership includes such institutions. The Government are still considering their response to the review in the light of the consultations.

The estimate in the policy review of the number of institutions which might neither want, nor qualify for, accredited status was a matter for the review team.

Illiteracy

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what current plans he has to combat illiteracy in adults.

Mr. Eggar: Local education authorities are the main providers of basic literacy tuition for adults; central Government support is provided to the Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit, which acts as the central focus for adult literacy and basic skills work in England and Wales.

The Department will continue to work closely with the Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit to promote improvements in adults' basic literacy skills. We are continuing to provide support through the education support grant programme to enable local education authorities to establish open learning centres and are encouraging the development of workplace tuition by employers. The training of tutors to teach adult literacy and related basic skills is currently a national priority area in the local education authority training grant programme. We will also continue to co-operate with the Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit, the BBC and the Employment Department on the basic skills accreditation initiative.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what resources are being devoted to combat illiteracy among adults in the current financial year; and what increase is proposed for the next three years.

Mr. Eggar: The Department of Education and Science and the Welsh Office support the Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit: the Department's grant for the curren financial year is £3,030,000. The Department is als supporting expenditure of £1·7 million this year in th education support grant programme to enable loca education authorities to establish open learning centre Training in adult literacy is a national priority area unde the local education authority training grants scheme an we are supporting expenditure of £700,000 this year.

Local education authorities are the main providers c adult literacy and other basic skills tuition. The Adu Literacy and Basic Skills Unit estimates that loca education authorities in England and Wales are spendin about £26·3 million a year on adult basic education. Th Employment Department funds training and enterpris councils, which provide training programmes takin account of local labour market needs, including th requirements of unemployed people with literac difficulties. The Home Office also makes provision fo those with inadequate literacy skills in prisons.

The Government are not yet in a position to announc what funds will be available in the next three years fo those programmes which it funds directly. The expenditu of local education authorities is for them to decide in th light of available resources.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State fo Education and Science how many teachers are current employed in the Government's efforts to tackle illiterac

Mr. Eggar: Comprehensive figures are not availabl Local education authorities provide annual returns to th Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit. These include th numbers of staff involved in teaching adult literacy an related basic skills. In November 1989, 751 full-time tuto and 8,514 part-time tutors were employed by loc education authorities. In addition, there were 3,9 volunteer tutors.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State f Education and Science if he will conduct a survey establish the extent of illiteracy in adults in the Unit Kingdom at the present time; and if he will make statement.

Mr. Eggar: I have no plans to conduct such a survey present. Our best estimate, based on evidence from t national child development study survey in 1981, sugge that about 13 per cent. of adults may have some proble with literacy and numeracy. I understand that a furth survey for this study is currently taking place.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State f Education and Science what agencies, voluntary a statutory, are involved in the Government's efforts tackle adult illiteracy.

Mr. Eggar: A number of voluntary sector provid have a substantial involvement in adult basic educatio for example, the National Association for the Care a Rehabilitation of Offenders, but a comprenhensive list not available. The main statutory agencies involved improving adult literacy and related basic skills include t following: the Department of Education and Science a the Welsh Office which support the Adult Literacy a Basic Skills Unit; the Employment Department throu its training, enterprise and education directorate; t Home Office; local education authorities; and oth organisations such as the BBC and the library service.

Refugees

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will consider making additional earmarked grants available to local education authorities for provision of English courses for refugees newly arrived in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Fallon: It is open to local education authorities in England and Wales to apply for grants paid under section 210 of the Education Reform Act 1988 to meet the educational needs, including the need for English language teaching, of those who are for the time being resident in a camp or other accommodation or establishment provided for refugees or for displaced or similar persons. Provision for English language teaching for other refugees is a matter for the local education authority concerned. However, if the refugees are from the Commonwealth, local education authorities in England and Wales may apply for grant paid by the Home Office under section 11 of the Local Government Act 1966 to support the cost of English language teaching.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will consider making additional resources available to asylum seekers to meet the fees sought by British universities or colleges to which they may apply.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The Government do not regard it as appropriate to provide resources to meet the course fees of applicants for asylum, since there is no presumption that they will be allowed to remain in this country. Those granted asylum are eligible to apply for mandatory awards, or to pay fees at the home rate if they do not qualify for such an award.

Student Loans Company

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if non-executive directors will be appointed to the board of the Student Loans Company.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The board of the Student Loans Company met on 1 November and, with the approval of the then holder of my office and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland, appointed Mr. Ralph Kanter as non-executive director. This appointment will bring additional commercial expertise to the board of a successful and efficient company.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Child Care Cases

Mr. Carrington: To ask the Attorney-General what steps have been taken by the Lord Chancellor to nominate members of the judiciary to deal with child care cases in the higher courts under the Children Act 1989; and whether the location at which these hearings will take place have been determined.

The Attorney-General: The Children Act 1989 is due to be implemented on 14 October 1991. Central to the philosophy of the Act is the principle that children's cases in the higher courts should be heard by judicary who, by reason of their experience and training, are specialists in family work.

Under the Courts and Legal Services Act 1990, the Lord Chancellor will have the power to nominate such judiciary, with the concurrence of the president of the family division. The nomination process is expected to extend over a period of months, but as a first step the Lord Chancellor has, with the approval of the right honourable Sir Stephen Brown, president of the family division, named 47 circuit judges who will be known as "designated family judges". This group of judges will be based at the network of county court "care centres" and will have the primary responsibility for hearing the child care cases transferred to those centres from the magistrates courts.

Each centre will also provide the focus for a local implementation committee which will be chaired by the designated family judge and which will play a major role in developing implementation plans based on local circumstances. It is envisaged that these committees will begin their work well before October 1991.

The location of the "care centres" which were announced on 2 August have been confirmed following widespread consultation with justices' clerks, local authorities and other interest groups. The 50 locations, together with the name of the designated family judge assigned to each one, are as follows:

Location	*Judge*
South Eastern circuit	
Brighton	His Honour Judge Hammerton
Chelmsford	His Honour Judge Groves TD RD
Guildford	His Honour Judge Main QC
Ipswich	His Honour Judge Barnett QC
Luton	His Honour Judge Hamilton
Medway	His Honour Judge Russell Vick QC
Milton Keynes	His Honour Judge Tyrer
Norwich	His Honour Judge Hyam
Reading	His Honour Judge Kenny
Watford	His Honour Judge Stockdale
Midland and Oxford circuit	
Birmingham	His Honour Judge Wilson Mellor QC
Coventry	His Honour Judge Harold Wilson
Derby	His Honour Judge Morrison
Leicester	His Honour Judge Young
Lincoln	His Honour Judge Hutchinson
Northampton	His Honour Judge John Wilson
Nottingham	His Honour Judge Heald
Oxford	His Honour Judge Peter Crawford QC
Peterborough	His Honour Judge Astill
Stoke	His Honour Judge Kenneth Taylor
Telford	His Honour Judge Shand
Wolverhampton	His Honour Judge Stuart-White
Worcester	His Honour Judge Roy Ward QC
Western circuit	
Bristol	Her Honour Judge Counsell
Taunton	His Honour Judge Willcock QC
Plymouth	His Honour Judge Sir Jonathan Clarke
Truro	His Honour Judge Cox
Bournemouth	Her Honour Judge McKinney
Portsmouth	His Honour Judge Wroath
Wales and Chester circuit	
Cardiff	His Honour Judge Norman Francis
Chester	His Honour Judge Roy Woolley
Caernarfon and Llangefni	His Honour Judge Eifion Roberts QC
Warrington and Rhyl	(to be appointed)
Swansea	His Honour Judge Michael Evans QC
Newport	His Honour Judge David Glyn Morgan
Merthyr Tydfil	His Honour Judge Graham Jones
Northern circuit	
Manchester	His Honour Judge Lees
Liverpool	Her Honour Judge Ebsworth

Location	Judge
Carlisle	His Honour Judge Bell
Blackburn	His Honour Judge Lockett
Lancaster	His Honour Judge Mahon
North Eastern circuit	
Hull	His Honour Judge Barker
Leeds	His Honour Judge Geoffrey Baker QC
Newcastle	His Honour Judge Paling
Middlesbrough	His Honour Judge Peter Fox QC
Sheffield	His Honour Judge Fricker
Sunderland	His Honour Judge Carr
York	His Honour Judge Coles QC

The principal registry of the family division will act as the centre for child care cases in London. Mrs. Justice Bracewell, whose appointment as family division liaison judge for London was announced on 27 September, will be assigned special responsibility for this centre.

Drumcree Church Parade

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Attorney-General whether any proceedings have been taken against spectators of the church parade to Drumcree parish church, County Armagh, on 8 July, in respect of their threatening, abusive and insulting language or in respect of their display of flags and posters likely to provoke a breach of the peace.

Mr. Cope: I have been asked to reply.

This is a matter for the chief constable, but I understand that no arrests were made by police during the parade and no proceedings are pending.

ENVIRONMENT

Civil Defence

Mr. Bill Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many civil servants are currently employed *(a)* full time and *(b)* part time by his Department on civil defence; what the total costs of employing staff on civil defence duties were in 1989-90; what the total costs of employing staff on civil defence duties are expected to be in 1990-91; and whether he has any plans for these staff to be transferred to work on other duties.

Mr. Chris Patten: The information requested is as follows:

Number of full-time staff employed on 16 November 1990	*Number of part-time staff employed on 16 November 1990*	*Total cost 1989-90 £*	*Estimated total cost 1990-91 £*
Nil	34	261K	230K

My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary announced on 16 October that he had initiated a review of the options for the future of civil defence arrangements in the light of east-west relations. Future levels of expenditure in civil defence will depend on the outcome of that review.

Vehicle Emissions

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State Environment what assessment his Department ha of the emission standard for carbon monoxide fo vehicles which would be necessary to achie environmental aims set out in his White Paper Common Inheritance".

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: It is our assessment t strict car exhaust emissions standards for which pressing within the European Community will enal achieve the Environmental White Paper aims for

Avian Pests

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State Environment what discussions he has had w European Commission concerning the birds di provisions for avian pest species.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: There have been many m with the Commission in recent years, at both mi and official level, at which ways of accommodat control practices within the directive's pr framework for birds and their habitats ha discussed.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State Environment what proposals he intends to pu European Community for a control scheme for av species following his decision not to amend the and Countryside Act.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Only the E Commission may submit proposals to the Cou amending Community law. In the Governmen however, there is a case for amending the E directive so that where member states can sh control of avian pest species is necessary and w endanger the survival of those species, they may a appropriate measures without having to operate sary bureaucratic procedures. The Commission is the Government's views.

Smoke Controls

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of the Environment what support will be offered Department to implement the extension of Clean controls to areas of dense smoke.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Local authorities designate smoke control areas under the Clean are eligible for Exchequer grant of 40 per cent. o of adapting heating and cooking appliances to smokelessly. Since 1979-80, grants totalling m £15 million have been awarded to local auth England and Wales.

The Mall

Mr. Summerson: To ask the Secretary of Sta Environment why The Mall in London SW1 is traffic on Sundays.

Mr. Trippier: The Mall is closed on Su facilitate pedestrian access to St. James's par improve the amenity of the area for visitors.

Government Offices (Furnishing)

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his assessment of the relative costs of furnishing Government offices *(a)* from Crown Suppliers and *(b)* from (i) German and (ii) other foreign suppliers.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Since 1987 Government Departments have been individually responsible for purchasing furniture wherever value for money can be obtained. The information requested is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is *(a)* the Government assistance per head in the North Devon district council area and *(b)* the community charge in the same area.

Mr. Key: External support to the North Devon district council area is £470 per adult in 1990-91. External support consists of revenue support grant, receipts from the national non-domestic rate pool, receipts from the safety net and low rateable values grant. The average community charge in the area is £319.

Charge payers in the North Devon area also receive additional Government assistance through community charge benefits and the transitional relief scheme.

Nature Conservancy Council

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the reasons he gave the Nature Conservancy Council for not providing it with additional funding to assist in the purchase of fenns and whixhall mosses.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: We expect the Council to make the safeguarding of important sites a top priority when disbursing the grant in aid it receives from my Department each year. Its grant in aid was increased by almost £4 million to £44·069 million this year and should have been more than sufficient for the purchase of the fenns and whixall mosses. We do not retain funds within the Department for site acquistion.

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will place in the Library the report commissioned by his Department to examine the feasibility of alternatives to reprocessing of nuclear waste.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I assume that the hon. Member is referring to DOE report No. DOE RW89/089 entitled "Packing, storage and direct disposal of spent AGR fuel". The report was submitted to the Department in November 1989. A copy was also sent to the national lending library in Boston Spa, where it is available to the public on request. I am arranging for a copy to be placed in the House Library.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment his Department has made of the use of dry storage of nuclear waste from advanced gas-cooled reactors as an alternative to reprocessing or subterranean disposal; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: No such assessment has been made by my Department. The hon. Member is aware of the report commissioned by my Department on the feasibility of dry storage of spent fuel. Spent fuel is not nuclear waste unless it is designated for direct disposal. The storage of nuclear fuel is a matter for the nuclear industry.

County Hall (London)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment why the bid from the County Hall Development Group for county hall was formally rescinded by the London residuary body; and what the impact on capital receipts for the London boroughs will be.

Mr. Key: The County Hall Development Group failed to complete the purchase of county hall as required by the London residuary body. LRB notified London boroughs on 25 October that there would be no general distribution of Greater London capital receipts this year.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about the future of county hall, London, SE1.

Mr. Key: My Department's letter of 24 July invited the London residuary body and the County Hall Development Group to submit amendments to the planning and associated applications that were the subject of a public inquiry in the autumn of 1989. Amendments were submitted by the London residuary body on 7 November and copies sent to all parties to the public inquiry. My Department has invited comments on the proposed amendments. I will be considering whether the inquiry should be reopened.

London Residuary Body

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what the £23·1 million deposit that appears on page 16 of the London residuary body accounts for 1989-90 relates to; and what has happened to this deposit.

Mr. Key: The sum of £23·1 million relates to the deposit on the purchase of county hall. It is now held by the London residuary body and reserved from distribution in 1990-91 in accordance with the terms of the 1990 London capital money order.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any plans to appoint a Labour party nominee to membership of the London residuary body.

Mr. Key: No.

Spencer House

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what items were transferred from Kenwood to Spencer house; and what was the basis of the transfer.

Mr. Trippier: A suite of furniture comprising five chairs and two sofas, which had been on loan from Spencer house to Kenwood house since 1958, was returned to the painted room at the newly restored Spencer house when it was reopened on Monday 19 November. The furniture was purchased by the Victoria and Albert museum in 1977 and remained on loan to Kenwood house until its recent

removal. This is consistent with the V and A's policy of reinstating furniture and works of art to their original locations wherever possible. The furniture will continue to be available for public view.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the basis of calculation that resulted in Wandsworth receiving the highest cash payment of inner London boroughs from the London residuary body in respect of capital receipts in 1989-90 and Barnet receiving the highest cash payment of the outer London boroughs.

Mr. Key: The distribution of capital receipts by the London residuary body is based on population. The London borough of Croydon received the largest cash payment of the outer London boroughs.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what response he has made to the recommendations in the report of the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux "Coping with the Community Charge".

Mr. Key *[holding answer 22 November 1990]:* Officials in my Department discussed with the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux the detail of the report last July. Substantial assistance has also been given to the association towards the creation of an office manual on the community charge for advice bureaux officers.

Langbaurgh District Council

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on his recent meeting with representatives of Langbaurgh district council.

Mr. Key *[holding answer 22 November 1990]:* I met my hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) and representatives of the district council on 21 November. The delegation made a number of points about the proposals for the revenue support grant settlement which will be considered before final decisions are taken. They also raised the question of charge capping.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Water Projects, India

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) when the water project in Orissa state will be going ahead; and if the Government will fund the training rig programme;

(2) what is the current position regarding talks between the Overseas Development Administration and *(a)* Save the Children, *(b)* UNICEF and *(c)* the People's Rural Education Movement in respect of the water projects in Orissa state, Uttar Pradesh, Rajastan and Gujarat, respectively.

Mrs. Chalker: We have submitted to the Government of India a detailed proposal for a mission to formulate an integrated rural water supply project in southern Orissa, to tackle engineering, health and social issues jointly. The organisations to be involved in the project, which may include those referred to by the hon. Lady, will depend on the mission's findings.

We have confirmed to UNICEF in writing our in funding British rigs for certain villages, in a nu Indian states, as part of its next five-year program have discussions with it next week. The need for a rig programme will depend on UNICEF's respon

HEALTH

Mentally Ill People

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of S Health what plans his Department has to extend t made available to care for the mentally ill, t mentally handicapped people in general.

Mr. Dorrell: The specific mental illness gra introduced because, in comparison with othe groups, local authorities had not been able sufficient priority to the mentally ill. In contra authority expenditure on services for mentally capped people has been rising steadily in real term sustained period, increasing by 72 per cent. 1979-80 and 1988-89 to £358 million.

Disabled People

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State fo what representations he has received on local au being empowered to make payments directly to people to make their own care arrangements.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: There have been a nu representations on the subject.

Snapethorpe Hospital, Wakefield

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State fo if he will ensure that any moneys accruing to Y regional health authority from the proposed Snapethorpe hospital, Wakefield, are made avai Wakefield district health authority.

Mr. Dorrell: To encourage district health autho identify surplus property it is our policy that distri authorities should benefit from the proceeds Regional health authorities are instructed, there pass a significant proportion of sale proceeds to th health authority which initiates the sale. Regar proposed sale of Snapethorpe I suggest the hon. contacts the regional health authority chairman, S Askew.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Teacher Training

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for N Ireland whether teacher training colleges have any in interpreting the recommendations of the comm course accreditation for teacher education.

Dr. Mawhinney: In order to be approved Department of Education, courses of initial training in Northern Ireland must meet criteria la by the Council for the Accreditation of Education.

Some of these criteria prescribe specific requ which must be met; but others are not so pre

seeking rather to establish a framework within which courses should be organised. Thus under the criteria relating to the selection and admission of students to postgraduate courses, it is for the institution to determine how appropriate the content of the entrant's initial degree is to the primary or secondary curriculum.

The colleges in Northern Ireland have exactly the same degree of latitude in this respect as their counterparts in England and Wales.

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a list of those colleges whose graduates' training and qualifications are *(a)* likely to be acceptable and *(b)* unlikely to be acceptable for course accreditation for teacher education and entry to a recognised teacher training course.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not available in the form requested. However, I can reassure the hon. Gentleman that all courses provided by Northern Ireland's two colleges of education meet the criteria laid down by the Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education.

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether any discussions have been held between the Department of Education (Northern Ireland) and education and library boards in relation to retraining for teachers or training for alternative careers for teachers experiencing difficulty coping with education reforms and curriculum changes; and if he will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Department of Education for Northern Ireland regularly discusses all aspects of the in-service training of teachers with the area boards. These have embarked on major training programmes in fulfilment of their statutory responsibility to ensure that all teachers in grant-aided schools in their areas have the necessary skills to implement the various aspects of education reform, including the common curriculum.

To assist the boards to implement such a programme, substantial additional resources, both money and additional staff training time have been made available to each board.

I am very pleased with the way in which Northern Ireland's teachers are responding to these changes.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Late Sittings

Ms. Harman: To ask the Lord President of the Council how much it cost to keep the House of Commons open after midnight in Sessions 1988-89 and 1989-90.

Mr. MacGregor: It is not possible to identify such costs.

Broadcasting of Parliament

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will list the statutory provisions that apply to the broadcasting of the proceedings of Parliament.

Mr. MacGregor: The broadcasting of the House's proceedings is carried out under the authority of the resolutions of the House of 26 July 1977 (sound broadcasting) and 19 July 1990 (televising). In the latter case, a further resolution will be required to provide authority for the continued televising of the House's proceedings after 1 October 1991 on the basis of permanent arrangements to be recommended to the House in due course by the Select Committee on Broadcasting.

The only statutory provisions which directly relate to the broadcasting of the House's proceedings are those contained in the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988. Section 165(4)(b) of the Act provides that

"any sound recording, film, live broadcast or live cable programme of the proceedings"

of either House is protected by copyright. Section 167 states that the functions of the House of Commons as owner of copyright are to be performed by Mr. Speaker. In exercise of these powers in relation to the broadcasting of proceedings, Mr. Speaker has granted a licence to House of Commons Broadcasting Unit Ltd., a company formed by the BBC and independent television, for the purposes of producing and distributing the signal.

As for the inclusion within programmes of extracts from, or live transmissions of, parliamentary proceedings, the broadcasters are, of course, subject to the same legal obligations and standards in such areas as political balance as apply under the various Broadcasting Acts to all their other activities. Responsibility for the operation and administration of the relevant legislation lies, in the first instance, with my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary.

TRANSPORT

Footbridges

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will indicate the approximate range of costs of footbridges with sloping ramps suitable for installation over six-lane trunk roads.

Mr. Chope: Typical construction costs for such a footbridge are currently estimated at between £200,000 and £350,000. The total cost could be higher depending on factors such as location, land and foundation costs, and the angle to the carriageway.

Public Service Vehicles

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to monitor the operation of the Public Service Vehicles (Conduct of Drivers, Inspectors, Conductors and Passengers) Regulations 1990.

Mr. Freeman: I am keeping various aspects of these regulations under review.

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many prosecutions have been brought under the Public Service Vehicles (Conduct of Drivers, Inspectors, Conductors and Passengers) Regulations 1990: and of those prosecutions, how many were in respect of clause 4.

Mr. Freeman: This information is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has on the number of complaints that have been made by members of the public to the police in respect of clause 4 of the Public Service Vehicles (Conduct of Drivers, Inspectors, Conductors and Passengers) Regulations 1990; and if he will undertake a review to assess the effectiveness of the enforcement of the above clause.

Mr. Freeman: Information on such complaints is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. We have no plans to review the enforcement of the regulations.

Midland Main Line

Mr. Ashby: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about British Rail's longer-term plans for the midland main line.

Mr. Freeman: The midland main line is, and will continue to be, an important line for british Rail. Over £150 million at cash prices has been invested in the line since 1979, £40 million on rolling stock and the rest on signalling, infrastructure and improvements to passenger facilities. British Rail's investment will continue and it will also be developing plans and taking key decisions over the next two to three years about the longer-term future of the line. These plans will assess the options available when the existing high-speed trains are ready for renewal. I can assure my hon. Friend that electrification of the line will be an option.

Mr. Tredinnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will ask British Rail to undertake further investment to cut travelling time on the midland main line from London to Leicester.

Mr. Freeman: I understand that InterCity is considering spending a further £5 to £10 million on the infrastructure of the midland main line in the mid-1990s to improve journey times. Depending on the availability of finance it might be possible for British Rail to advance some, but not all, of this investment.

East London River Crossing

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received from the European Commission about the environmental impact of the east London river crossing on Oxleas woods.

Mr. Chope: I have not received any representation from the European Commission on this subject.

Toll Roads

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) why his Department did not allow the Staffordshire forum of district councils to make a presentation on the proposed toll road;

(2) if he will name each of the six companies which are currently bidding to win the contract from his Department in respect of the toll road alternative to the Birmingham-Manchester M6;

(3) if he will place in the Library alternative proposed routes for the proposed toll road alternative to the M6.

Mr. Freeman: In April this year, we invited outline proposals from the private sector for new privately funded road capacity between Birmingham and Manchester. The following four groups responded:

Balfour Beatty
Tarmac
Trafalgar House/Italstat
Western Parkway Consortium: led by Manufacturers Hanover and Cofiroute.

In addition, the following two groups expressed an interest in participating in the project:

W. S. Atkins Consultants
Mitsubishi Bank.

The proposals that we have received are bei evaluated and, at this stage, remain co confidential. The Department is currently various aspects of the proposals with the respo still too early to give details of any of these pro is not certain yet which—if any—would be ac the Government. When we are clear about proposal, consultations will take place with a parties—including the Staffordshire forum councils—in the normal way.

M6

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State fo if he will estimate the volume of traffic current M6 motorway and for each of the next five 2030.

Mr. Freeman: On some weekdays, 24- exceeding 100,000 vehicles have been record junctions 11 and 16. A detailed breakdown o flow figures is given in "Information for Bidders" for the Birmingham-Manchester petition. A copy is in the House Library. National Road Traffic Forecasts" forecasts tra to grow between 83 and 143 per cent. by the

Local influences may mean that traffic de differ from the national road traffic forecasts.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Corporation Tax

Dr. Moonie: To ask the Chancellor of the he will break down the 1989 figure of corporat by industrial and provident societies given in h 23 October, *Official Report*, column *107*, i classes of such societies listed by the Registrar Societies in his annual report.

Mr. Maude: Building societies account f bulk of the total, but the full breakdown req be prepared only at disproportionate cost.

Economic and Finance Council

Mr. Page: To ask the Chancellor of the Ex will make a statement on the outcome of the la of the European Community's Economic Council.

Mr. Maude: The ECOFIN Council met in 19 November. The Minister of State for Corp and I represented the United Kingdom. Furt was made in discussions on the investm directive. The arrangements for VAT contro were also discussed and I explained the impo United Kingdom of further consultations wit also stressed the importance of setting thresh minimise the impact of VAT requiremen businesses. The presidency gave a brief report in developing a system for controlling move the Community of goods subject to ex Discussion of travellers' allowances for duty was postponed.

The Council discussed a report from the p negotiations with the European Parlia

revisions to the financial perspective of the Community budget arising from German unification and the Gulf crisis.

The Commission reported on the Community's offer in the financial services negotiations in the Uruguay round. This offer received general support.

Capital Asset Information Systems

Mr. Stern: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the development of proposals for improved capital asset information systems in Government.

Mr. Maples: An interdepartmental working group has now completed a study into these systems and has made recommendations. The report of the group has now been published and copies have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Controlled Drugs

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement as to the way in which Her Majesty's Customs and Excise assesses the street value of controlled drugs for the purpose of preparing evidence of value for courts.

Mr. Ryder: When called upon to provide a street value of controlled drugs Her Majesty's Customs and Excise use the national average street price as calculated by the national drugs intelligence unit from information provided by the police.

Privatisations

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras of 13 November, *Official Report*, column *112*, (1) if he will publish the list of appointments various companies have held in advising on past privatisations;

(2) whether the performance of any adviser on privatisation has been such as to cause them to warn Departments before considering them for a further privatisation.

Mr. Maude *[holding answers 22 November 1990]:* I have placed a copy of the list the hon. Member requested in the Library. Obviously, past performance is one of the factors taken into account in considering an adviser for a further appointment.

DEFENCE

Chemical Weapons

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what is his policy as to the most appropriate response to a chemical weapon attack by Iraq;

(2) what is his policy as to the most appropriate response to the use of chemical weapons by Iraq.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Government would take the gravest view of any Iraqi attack using chemical weapons. I am not prepared to indicate in advance what our response to such an attack might be.

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if the Government will invest further resources in chemical weapons research following the developments in the Gulf;

(2) if the Government will invest further resources in biological weapons research following the developments in the Gulf.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that my predecessor the hon. Member for Romford (Mr. Neubert), gave to her questions on 8 February 1990, *Official Report*, columns *775-76*.

Porton Down

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what were the funds allocated to Porton Down chemical weapons research establishment in 1990; and what will be the level of funding in 1991.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The budget of the chemical defence establishment, Porton Down for the financial year 1990-91 is some £24 million. Budgets for 1991-92 will be determined in due course.

Signal Tower, Brizlee Wood

Mr. Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether it is planned to demolish the existing signal tower and dishes at Brizlee wood, Northumberland.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No. The station is expected to remain operational for the foreseeable future.

Service Personnel (Insurance)

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions have been held with the insurance industry in order to ensure appropriate mechanisms to ensure that service personnel are not disadvantaged in the housing market or in respect of life insurance and to ensure that they are compensated for any extra financial burden; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Department keeps in close touch with the insurance industry through the Association of British Insurers and through insurance brokers with traditional links with the services.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received regarding incidents where members of the armed services, including individuals neither under orders nor on standby, have been asked to pay a surcharge or otherwise disadvantaged before being accepted for life insurance cover, due to the Gulf crisis.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I understand that one letter has been received by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps he will take to ensure that members of the armed services who are charged a surcharge in respect of life insurance due to the Gulf crisis, even when neither under orders nor on standby, are compensated for such additional costs.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is not yet clear whether such steps are necessary, but we are keeping the matter under review.

EMPLOYMENT

Demographic Changes

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) if he will list the members of the interdepartmental working group set up to consider ways of alleviating the effects of forecast demographic change to the work force in the 1990s;

(2) if he will publish the recommendations made by the working group set up to consider ways of alleviating the effects of the forecast demographic change to the work force in the 1990s.

Mr. Jackson: An ad-hoc interdepartmental working group of officials was set up in 1987 to consider the implications of the decline in the number of young people entering the labour market. The working group consisted of officials from the Department of Employment, which chaired the group, the Department of Education and Science, the Manpower Services Commission, the Department of Health and Social Security, the Manpower and Personnel Office and the Ministry of Defence.

The working group's findings were summarised in an article entitled "New Entrants to the Labour Market in the 1990s", which was published in the May 1988 edition of *Employment Gazette*, and in chapter 1 of the Government White Paper "Employment for the 1990s" (Cm 540).

Labour Statistics

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many were employed in the *(a)* agricultural industry, *(b)* coal mining industry, *(c)* shipbuilding and ship repair industries and *(d)* steel industry as at June 1990.

Mr. Jackson: Information is given is the table.

Employees in employment industries (SIC 1980): Great Britain

	Thousands June 1990
Agriculture and horticulture (Class 01)	260·2
Coal extraction and solid fuels (Group 111)	85·5
Iron and steel (Group 221)	25·3
Shipbuilding and ship repairing (Group 361)	41·2

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish a table showing the numbers and rate of unemployment in Great Britain and the United Kingdom using *(a)* the International Labour Office definition and *(b)* the claimant count in each year since 1974.

Mr. Jackson *[holding answer 20 November 1990]:* The information requested is contained in the following table. Levels of unemployment based on the International Labour Office definition are not available before 1984.

Year	[1]*Total claimant count (annual average unemployment) (seasonally adjusted) Level*	*Rate*	*Tota (s*
United Kingdom			
1974	518·3	2·0	
1975	796·2	3·1	
1976	1,091·3	4·2	
1977	1,160·8	4·4	
1978	1,144·0	4·3	
1979	1,074·3	4·0	
1980	1,364·4	5·1	
1981	2,172·2	8·1	
1982	2,544·9	9·5	
1983	2,788·0	10·5	
1984	2,916·3	10·7	
1985	3,027·9	10·9	
1986	3,097·9	11·1	
1987	2,806·5	10·0	
1988	2,274·9	8·1	
[3]1989	1,784·4	6·3	
Great Britain			
1974	492·5	2·0	
1975	761·6	3·0	
1976	1,046·2	4·1	
1977	1,111·5	4·3	
1978	1,091·0	4·2	
1979	1,021·4	3·9	
1980	1,301·1	5·0	
1981	2,086·3	8·0	
1982	2,447·8	9·4	
1983	2,681·3	10·3	
1984	2,806·1	10·6	
1985	2,915·2	10·8	
1986	2,975·3	11·0	
1987	2,684·4	9·8	
1988	2,161·7	7·8	
[3]1989	1,678·8	6·0	

[1] The seasonally adjusted series has been revise to allow for the changes in conditions of the Red Payment Scheme, effective from July 1989. Th series takes into account changes in the u consistent with the current definition of une assessment of trends over time possible.
[2] ILO definition levels of unemployment for U Great Britain only available from 1984.
[3] Preliminary estimates only 1989.

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secre Employment if he will publish a table sh unemployment in each country in the International Labour Office definition i 1974.

Mr. Jackson: Following is the infor OECD countries for which standardis rates are available. The table is taken publication "Quarterly Labour Force S figures provide the nearest comparable definition.

Standardised unemployment rates in selected OECD countries Annual Data

	1974	*1975*	*1976*	*1977*	*1978*	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Canada	5·3	6·9	7·1	8·0	8·3	7·4	7·4	7·5	10·9	11·8	11·2	10·4	9·5
United States	5·5	8·3	7·6	6·9	6·0	5·8	7·0	7·5	9·5	9·5	7·4	7·1	6·9
Japan	1·4	1·9	2·0	2·0	2·2	2·1	2·0	2·2	2·4	2·6	2·7	2·6	2·8
Australia	2·6	4·8	4·7	5·6	[2]6·2	6·2	6·0	5·7	7·1	9·9	8·9	8·2	8·0
New Zealand[1]	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	3·9
Belgium[3]	3·0	5·0	6·4	7·4	7·9	8·2	8·8	10·8	12·6	12·1	12·1	11·3	11·2
Finland	1·7	2·2	3·8	5·8	7·2	5·9	4·6	4·8	5·3	5·4	5·2	5·0	5·3
France	2·8	4·0	4·4	4·9	5·2	5·9	6·3	7·4	8·1	8·3	9·7	10·2	10·4
Germany (Federal Republic)	[2]1·6	[2]3·6	[2]3·7	[2]3·6	[2]3·5	[2]3·2	3·0	4·4	6·1	8·0	7·1	7·2	6·4

	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987
Ireland	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	13·7	15·4	16·8	17·1	16·9
Italy	5·3	5·8	6·6	7·0	7·1	7·6	7·5	7·8	8·4	8·8	9·4	9·6	10·5	10·9
Netherlands	[2]2·7	5·2	5·5	5·3	[3]5·3	5·4	6·0	8·5	11·4	12·0	11·8	10·6	9·9	9·6
Norway	1·5	2·3	1·7	1·4	1·8	2·0	1·6	2·0	2·6	3·4	3·1	2·6	2·0	2·1
Portugal	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	7·9	8·4	8·5	8·5	7·0
Spain	2·6	3·6	4·6	5·2	6·9	8·5	11·2	13·9	15·8	17·2	20·0	21·4	21·0	20·1
Sweden	2·0	1·6	1·6	1·8	2·2	2·1	2·0	2·5	3·2	3·5	3·1	2·8	2·7	1·9
United Kingdom	2·9	4·3	5·6	[2]6·0	[2]5·9	[2]5·0	[2]6·4	[2]9·8	[2]11·3	[2]12·4	11·7	11·2	11·2	10·3
OECD Total	[2]3·5	5·2	5·3	[2]5·5	[2]5·2	[2]5·1	5·8	6·7	[2]8·1	8·6	8·0	7·8	7·7	7·3

[1] The data are not seasonally adjusted.
[2] Secretariat estimates (or preliminary figures).
[3] Revised series.
OECD Stands for Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Refugees

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will conduct a review of the social security provisions which are currently applied to refugees newly arrived in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: We have no plans to do so.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will increase the resources made available to publicise the availability of social security assistance available to refugees newly arrived in the United Kingdom.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: We have no plans to do so. Adequate information is already available to newly arrived refugees and their advisers. All those refugees who do not already have contacts in the United Kingdom can turn for advice to the numerous refugee agencies, many of which receive Government funding.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what savings are made to the social security budget by reducing income support available to asylum seekers.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: None. The income support budget takes into account the provision for asylum seekers allowed under the rules.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will issue new guidelines to his Department's local offices authorising the award of social fund grants to bona fide refugees newly arrived in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Scott: No. There is already guidance to local offices on social fund provision for refugees. They can apply for a crisis loan when they first arrive in the United Kingdom. If they receive income support they can apply for a community care grant. In both cases the social fund officer will consider the full circumstances of their claim before making a decision.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) if he will make the full income support rate of payment available to asylum seekers newly arrived in the United Kingdom;

(2) if he will increae the rates of income support presently offered to asylum seekers under the age of 25 years.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: There are no plans at p changes in the relevant income support rules.

Residential Homes

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State f Security if Price Waterhouse was asked to eva quality of care offered when undertaking its rece into residential and nursing homes.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The objective of the su to identify the range of costs of caring for pe different types and levels of dependency in varying size and staff-resident ratios in differen Great Britain. All the homes in the survey would to registration and inspection by the relevant authority to ensure appropriate standards und tion made by my right hon. Friend the Secretar for Health.

WALES

Welsh Language

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of Wales if he will announce the results of his co about exemptions from Welsh in the national cu

Mr. David Hunt: I have carefully considered of the Curriculum Council for Wales, local authorities and others on the issues set ou consultation document published by my prede 28 February.

There was general approval for the proposal the provision that schools not yet teaching Wel teach it for a "reasonable time" until the curriculum requirements come into effect regulations to implement this on 12 November.

There was also widespread though not u approval for the proposal to exempt from the curriculum requirement for Welsh pupils fro Wales who enter a school in Wales for the first t final year of key stage 3 or during key stage therefore be issuing for consultation draft regu implement this exemption for such pupils prov have not studied Welsh in the school curricul least one academic year in any of the prece academic years.

The consultation document indicated a prepa consider proposals from LEAs for an extension further two years of the period for phasing in We this was necessary and formed part of an LEA pl full introduction of Welsh in the national curri

Clwyd, Gwynedd, Mid Glamorgan and West Glamorgan LEAs have not sought any extension and I propose to accept that.

Gwent LEA, which starts from a position of very limited provision in its schools, put forward a detailed plan for implementation which would require some exemptions for up to two years. I welcome the positive approach the authority has taken and I am making proposals in line with its implementation plan.

Powys and South Glamorgan LEAs also put forward implementation plans which I accept and which provide for deferment in some schools for up to two years.

Dyfed LEA has not sought any exemptions in general, but drew attention to the secondary schools of South Pembrokeshire with which it had agreed a proposal to extend the implementation of key stage 3 so that it would be taught to the end of key stage 3 by 1997. I accept this proposal.

I am now proceeding to consultation on proposals to implement the necessary limited period exemptions.

Dyfed LEA also takes the view that it would not be appropriate in the secondary schools in south Pembrokeshire to implement the national curriculum requirement for Welsh in key stage 4 at present. In view of the LEA's policy and of the distinctive historical and linguistic character of the south Pembrokeshire area, I shall be consulting interested bodies on a proposal to exempt the south Pembrokeshire secondary schools from Welsh at key stage 4. However, I do not think it would be right for any pupil in Wales to be deprived of the chance to choose to study Welsh in key stage 4. I would therefore propose that the exempted schools should make arrangements for Welsh to be an option for those pupils who choose it. Subject to that, I would propose to exempt the following schools from Welsh at key stage 4:

Greenhill School, Tenby
Milford Haven Comprehensive School
Pembroke School
Sir Thomas Picton School, Haverfordwest
Tasker-Millward VC Comprehensive School, Haverfordwest

The consultation exercise addressed the issue of flows of pupils across the border with England. Neither the CCW nor any LEA considered it sensible to make exemption regulations which would single out children who live in England but who are in classes in schools in Wales. I do not propose to do so. Nevertheless there are schools which take in numbers of pupils from England. Some schools with catchment areas or potential catchment areas which cross the English border have expressed concerns about possible losses of pupils if they were required to study Welsh, particularly at key stage 4. I therefore propose to respond to those concerns by consulting on proposals to exempt the following schools from the national curriculum requirements for Welsh at key stage 4. I propose that the exempted schools should make arrangements for Welsh to be available as an option at key stage 4 for those pupils who choose it:

Clwyd
Darland High School
Hawarden High School
The Maelor School, Wrexham
St. Richard Gwynn High School, Flint
St. David's High School, Saltney
St. Joseph's High School, Wrexhyam

Gwent
Monmouth Comprehensive School

Patient Care, Dyfed

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what initiatives are being taken to promote a better quality of care for patients in Dyfed, Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: The quality strategy "A Quality Health Service for Wales", published in April 1990, is not intended to be prescriptive but to provide a framework within which individual health authorities can develop their own quality programmes in the context of their own strategic intent. Health authorities are required to consider how best they could progress quality within their own areas, using the strategy as a working framework.

Within the context of the Department's annual review East Dyfed health authority has confirmed its commitment to the development of total quality management (TQM) and the pursuance of quality care as a key task for the health authority within the district's overall philosophy of being consumer responsive. The authority is also developing explicit statements on quality standards for the contracting process. Detailed information on initiatives in East Dyfed is, however, a matter for the authority.

Welsh Speakers, Ceredigion

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many Welsh speakers there are in Ceredigion; what were the corresponding figures for 1960, 1970 and 1980; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The most recent data available are from the 1981 census. Information on Welsh speakers in earlier years is also related to the dates of the census. The number of people aged three and over who were recorded as speaking Welsh in the 1961, 1971 and 1981 censuses was as follows:

	Enumerated population speaking Welsh[1]
1961	[2]38,500
1971	[2]35,800
1981	35,200

[1] The enumerated population consists of persons present at midnight on census night whether or not they were usually resident there.
[2] Cardiganshire.

Farmers' Unions

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) when he last met the National Farmers Union; what representations it made to him; and if he will make a statement;

(2) when he last met the Farmers Union of Wales; what representations it made to him; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: My right hon. Friend had a joint meeting with representatives of the National Farmers Union and the Farmers Union of Wales on 25 October 1990 to discuss the state of the agriculture industry in Wales.

Sheepmeat Producers

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what action he has taken to assist sheepmeat producers.

Sir Wyn Roberts: We were able to bring forward the timing of the two advance payments of sheep annual premium. Most, if not all, producers in Wales will, by now, have received the first payment of £2·40 per eligible ewe and will shortly receive the second instalment of £2·45 per head. This represents a cash flow benefit of some £25 million for producers in Wales. In addition, sheepmeat producers in the LFA can look forward to a 4 ecu per head (currently about £3·12) supplement to the sheep annual premium for 1991 as a result of this year's price-fixing agreement. The benefits of the green pound devaluation negotiated at the price fixing will also accrue from the beginning of the 1991 marketing year.

Hill Farmers

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what policy initiatives he proproses to safeguard and to enhance the incomes of hill farmers; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Farmers in our less-favoured areas benefit directly from a number of special measures that are already in place, including the hill livestock compensatory allowances, enhanced rates of capital grants and for 1991 the maximum permitted payment under EC rules of the suckler cow premium. For the future we shall continue to seek to ensure that hill farmers in Wales are able to compete effectively and on equal terms with the rest of Europe.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received from hill farmers; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: During his recent visits to a number of hill farms my right hon. Friend discussed with farmers a wide range of issues affecting the agricultural industry in the less-favoured areas of Wales.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many times he has visited European Community institutions on the continent to discuss upland farmers in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: In line with long-established practice, my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food takes the lead in European Community discussions and negotiations. We are in regular contact with him and we know that he is fully apprised of the needs of the upland farmers in Wales.

SCOTLAND

Second Homes

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the number of registered second homes by district council area as at *(a)* 1 April 1980, *(b)* 1 April 1988 and *(c)* 1 April 1990.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Information is held centrally only on the estimated numbers of second and holiday homes in each district council area at 30 June 1988. These are given in the table. Comparable figures for 1980 and 1990 are not available.

Estimated number of second and holiday homes, 30 June 1988
Scotland

Area	*Number*
Scotland	28,308
Borders	
Berwickshire	295
Ettrick and Lauderdale	321
Roxburgh	497
Tweeddale	258
Central	
Clackmannan	39
Falkirk	216
Stirling	287
Dumfries and Galloway	
Annandale and Eskdale	317
Nithsdale	379
Stewartry	704
Wigtown	575
Fife	
Dunfermline	120
Kirkcaldy	210
North East Fife	925
Grampian	
Aberdeen	567
Banff and Buchan	599
Gordon	489
Kincardine and Deeside	639
Moray	735
Highland	
Badenoch and Strathspey	946
Caithness	260
Inverness	679
Lochaber	700
Nairn	110
Ross and Cromarty	1,180
Skye and Lochalsh	715
Sutherland	670
Lothian	
East Lothian	697
Edinburgh	1,034
Midlothian	55
West Lothian	75
Strathclyde	
Argyll and Bute	3,809
Bearsden and Milngavie	6
Clydebank	43
Clydesdale	188
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	41
Cumnock and Doon Valley	78
Cunninghame	2,492
Dumbarton	441
EAst Kilbride	57
Eastwood	26
Glasgow	1,071
Hamilton	70
Inverclyde	112
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	86
Kyle and Carrick	677
Monklands	82
Motherwell	33
Renfrew	181
Strathkelvin	48
Tayside	
Angus	679
Dundee	296
Perth and Kinross	1,543
Islands Council	
Orkney Islands	202
Shetland Islands	244
Western Isles	510

Local Government Finance

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people in each local authority area in Scotland have received a payment under the community charge special payments scheme; and what is the total sum paid out by each authority.

Mr. Lang: No local authority has yet provided details of the numbers of people receiving special payments in its area or of the amounts involved.

Sand Eel Catches

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what were the numbers of 0-group, 1-group and older fish in the sand eel catches in International Council for the Exploration of the Seas division VIa in each of the last five years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The estimated numbers are as follows:

Thousands

	0-Group	*1-Group*	*2 Group and older*
1985	3,260,010	152,092	1,240,938
1986	3,065,660	1,845,060	873,010
1987	700,070	1,196,780	518,460
1988	967,187	258,855	2,352,518
1989	444,595	225,564	1,284,771

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was *(a)* the size of the sand eel catches in International Council for the Exploration of the Seas division VIa in 1990, *(b)* the amount of fishing effort directed towards sand eel fishing and *(c)* the home ports of vessels concerned.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information requested is as follows:

(a) The sand eel catch in International Council for the Exploration of the Seas area VIa in 1990 up to and including October was 16,515 tonnes.

(b) 2,065 hours' fishing.

The data available are up to and including October 1990 and are therefore subject to revision.

(c) Eleven vessels have recorded sand eel catches from area VIa to date. The districts of the vessels concerned are:

	Number
Fraserburgh	3
Stornoway	2
Aberdeen	1
Ayr	1
MacDuff	1
Mallaig	1
Orkney	1
Shetland	1

Child Care, Fife

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if anyone involved in the inquiry into child care policy in Fife region has been given immunity from prosecution by the Crown Office; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 12 November 1990]:* I am advised that one witness was granted limited immunity in respect of one incident not involving children.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Prisoners (Medical Care)

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the normal arrangements for providing medical care for prisoners who are seriously ill; and under what circumstances treatment is normally arranged outside prison.

Mrs. Rumbold: The medical officer of a prison is statutorily responsible for the health care of its prisoners and has clinical discretion to make whatever arrangements are deemed appropriate to meet the health needs of those who become ill. In general the medical officer will arrange for treatment to be received outside when the treatment required is such that it cannot be provided by a prison service hospital or medical centre.

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what form of transport is normally used to convey a prisoner when medical treatment is thought to be necessary outside a prison; and what security arrangements are made.

Mrs. Rumbold: Such matters are determined at the time according to the circumstances of the particular case, including the security classification of the prisoner.

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners in the last 12 months have been permitted to receive medical care outside prison; and what are the criteria for deciding if private medical care is appropriate in a particular case.

Mrs. Rumbold: In the 12 months ended 31 March 1990 prisoners attended out-patient departments of NHS hospitals on 18,740 occasions. During the same period there were 1,988 temporary removals of prisoners to NHS hospitals for in-patient observation or treatment. The number of prisoners involved is not recorded. More recent information is not available centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Instances of prisoners being allowed to receive private medical treatment outside prison are not statistically recorded. A prisoner may receive in-patient treatment privately only in exceptional circumstances. The medical officer must be satisfied that the treatment should be carried out during the period in which the prisoner is likely to be in custody; that it cannot be provided in a prison service hospital; and that either the prisoner should be treated significantly earlier privately than under NHS arrangements or the prisoner had received an appointment for private in-patient treatment before coming into prison. Prisoners are not normally allowed to receive out-patient treatment on a private basis, but individual cases are considered on their merits.

Freemasons

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will hold an inquiry into the operation of freemasonry within the Prison Department and the prison system.

Mrs. Rumbold: We have no plans to do so, but if the hon. Member has any specific cause for concern, perhaps he could let me know.

Mr. Paul Malone

Mr. Terry Fields: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he is going to reply to the letter from the hon. Member for Liverpool, Broadgreen regarding the findings of the two-year inquiry into the matter of the incarceration of Paul Malone.

Mr. John Patten: I wrote to the hon. Member about Mr. Malone's case on 21 November.

Controlled Drugs

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many *(a)* male and *(b)* female prisoners were serving prison sentences on 1 September for offences of importing controlled drugs;

(2) if he will enumerate by nationalities the prisoners serving sentences on 1 September for offences of importing controlled drugs, and the prisons in which they are serving their sentences.

Mrs. Rumbold: The only readily available information on the types of drugs offence does not separately distinguish females or nationality; it is published annually in "Prison Statistics England and Wales" (table 1(a) of the latest volume, for 1989, Cm. 1221), copies of which are in the Library.

Prisons (Education)

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many GCSE examinations were sat by prisoners in Her Majesty's prisons in the last academic year; if the national curriculum is to be applied to education in prisons; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: A total of 666 GCSE examinations were sat by prisoners in 1989-90. Prison service establishments will, as far as possible, apply the national curriculum.

Forensic Scientists

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the numbers of forensic scientists available for police work.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: There are currently 588 staff in post in the forensic science service of whom 527 are scientific and technical staff who, directly or indirectly, provide scientific support to the police.

Mr. Charles McGhee

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will refer for review by the Court of Appeal the case of Charles McGhee, who was convicted and sentenced on 17 May 1989; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: Representations from Mr. McGhee which have been submitted on his behalf are being considered to decide whether there are any grounds to justify our intervention.

Remand

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he intends to increase the number of remand places available for female defendants remanded into custody from Welsh courts.

Mrs. Rumbold: Female prisoners committed into custody by courts in north Wales are at present received at Risley remand centre and those committed by courts in south Wales are received at Pucklechurch. The provision of remand places for female prisoners at these establishments is kept under constant review and there are currently plans to create a further 60 places for females at Risley by the mid-1990s.

Deportation Orders

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many deportation orders he has signed in the last 10 years.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The numbers of deportation orders made in each year since 1980 are published in table 18 of the annual Home Office Command Paper "Control of Immigration Statistics, United Kingdom, 1989" (Cm.1124), a copy of which is in the Library.

Immigration

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the backlog of immigration cases in each category for October.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The number of outstanding cases relates to casework in B1 division in the immigration and nationality department and is as follows:

Outstanding Cases—October

	Number
General Immigration Casework[1][2]	20,910
Asylum and Related Casework[1][3]	29,936

[1] Does not include applications received in the Department but which await allocation to caseworkers.

[2] Includes referred entry clearance applications, and enquiries submitted by letter, as well as variation of leave cases. Includes both general and Eastern European casework (the latter was absorbed into general casework in July 1990).

[3] These figures are a total of all work outstanding in the Refugee Unit.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many times the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State has visited *(a)* Lunar house and *(b)* the Liverpool passport office.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I have paid three visits to Lunar house and one to Liverpool passport office since November 1989.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many passports are held at *(a)* Lunar house and *(b)* the Liverpool passport office.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I regret that the information requested is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Refugees

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will take steps to amend existing regulations to allow newly arrived refugees who have children to apply for family reunion as of the date of their arrival in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Once a person is recognised as a refugee, his or her spouse and minor children may be admitted to the United Kingdom immediately.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will amend the employment regulations to allow newly arrived asylum seekers to qualify for work permits as soon as they arrive in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We have no present plans to change our practice in allowing asylum seekers to work. The issue will be considered in the current review of asylum arrangements.

Visitors

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the number of visitors to the United Kingdom admitted in each quarter in 1988 and 1989, showing the numbers by country of embarkation.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 14 November 1990]:* The available information is by nationality and is given in the tables.

Table 1
Ordinary and business visitors admitted to the United Kingdom by nationality, 1988

Geographical region/ Nationality	*Total visitor admissions in 1988* 1st quarter	2nd quarter	3rd quarter	4th quarter
Western Europe (excluding EC)				
Austria	21,500	24,800	46,500	21,900
Cyprus	5,350	6,730	9,600	7,710
Finland	19,800	28,900	29,200	24,600
Malta	6,860	5,750	9,980	7,770
Norway	49,800	59,400	65,100	59,800
Sweden	80,700	113,000	117,000	104,000
Switzerland	43,400	62,400	77,700	63,800
Turkey	9,740	10,300	13,300	11,500
Yugoslavia	6,000	7,760	10,800	8,200
Western Europe (excluding EC)	243,000	319,000	379,000	309,000
Eastern Europe				
Bulgaria	450	950	1,310	890
Czechoslovakia	2,480	4,770	5,900	3,710
GDR	900	1,510	1,670	1,160
Hungary	2,780	4,920	7,420	3,730
Poland	5,600	9,480	16,700	7,470
Romania	650	730	940	700
USSR	1,090	1,860	2,580	2,310
Eastern Europe	14,000	24,200	36,500	20,000
Europe (excluding EC)	257,000	343,000	416,000	329,000
Americas				
Argentina	2,710	3,390	4,000	2,330
Barbados	410	1,200	3,050	820
Brazil	9,960	13,300	22,000	12,000
Canada	51,800	111,000	150,000	73,800
Chile	1,340	2,060	2,240	1,360
Colombia	1,570	3,500	4,090	2,360
Cuba	80	170	120	90
Guyana	380	640	1,540	710
Jamaica	1,790	3,710	6,820	2,860
Mexico	2,520	5,740	16,200	5,130
Peru	1,190	1,620	1,820	1,150
Trinidad and Tobago	1,260	1,990	4,690	1,860
United States of America	294,000	530,000	676,000	424,000
Uruguay	680	1,320	1,170	620
Venezuela	1,080	1,550	3,000	1,660
Americas	371,000	681,000	897,000	531,000
Africa				
Algeria	2,790	2,800	5,450	2,7
Egypt	4,910	6,250	11,300	5,8
Ethiopia	530	710	1,060	7
Ghana	3,640	4,580	7,880	4,7
Kenya	2,950	5,130	8,250	4,6
Libya	470	660	930	4
Mauritius	1,750	3,180	5,280	2,2
Morocco	2,000	2,580	4,550	3,3
Nigeria	17,200	17,600	25,500	19,8
Sierra Leone	980	960	2,320	1,2
Somalia	170	230	320	2
South Africa	13,000	22,900	29,800	19,4
Sudan	1,420	3,900	3,590	1,8
Tanzania	1,360	2,200	3,060	1,6
Tunisia	1,350	1,340	1,550	1,4
Uganda	960	1,620	2,090	1,2
Zambia	1,450	2,010	2,110	2,5
Zimbabwe	3,110	4,860	5,900	4,4
Africa	60,000	83,500	121,000	78,4
Asia				
Indian sub-continent				
Bangladesh	1,670	3,040	3,860	2,4
India	19,200	50,900	51,500	28,0
Pakistan	9,560	20,000	27,900	12,0
Indian sub-continent	30,400	73,900	83,300	42,4
Middle East				
Iran	4,070	4,000	6,640	4,7
Iraq	1,510	1,770	2,820	1,6
Israel	17,600	16,400	49,100	21,1
Jordan	2,900	3,910	5,080	2,8
Kuwait	4,060	5,820	12,400	3,6
Lebanon	3,290	4,370	5,430	3,5
Saudi Arabia	5,620	5,510	15,900	4,4
Syria	350	450	860	4
Middle East	39,400	42,200	98,200	42,4
Remainder of Asia				
China	2,070	3,140	3,740	2,9
Indonesia	1,120	3,610	3,720	1,7
Japan	102,000	76,900	110,000	88,2
Malaysia	5,390	9,940	10,800	9,8
Philippines	1,960	5,030	6,810	2,7
Singapore	3,780	10,700	7,260	5,8
Sri Lanka	1,970	3,660	5,480	2,6
Thailand	1,970	6,540	4,290	3,0
BDTC Hong Kong	6,300	7,730	13,100	6,3
Remainder of Asia	127,000	127,000	165,000	123,0
Asia	197,000	243,000	346,000	208,0
Australasia				
Australia	33,500	71,400	92,200	55,2
New Zealand	7,400	21,200	25,900	12,1
Australasia	40,900	92,600	118,000	67,4
British Overseas Citizens	1,140	1,880	2,920	1,0
Other countries not elsewhere specified	22,000	31,800	54,500	29,2
Stateless	7,040	11,200	19,200	8,2

Geographical region/ Nationality	Total visitor admissions in 1988 1st quarter	2nd quarter	3rd quarter	4th quarter
All Nationalities (excluding EC)	955,000	1,490,000	1,980,000	1,250,000

Table 2
Ordinary and business visitors admitted to the United Kingdom by nationality, 1989

Geographical region/ Nationality	Total visitor admissions in 1989 1st quarter	2nd quarter	3rd quarter	4th quarter
Western Europe (excluding EC)				
Austria	20,900	29,600	51,200	22,900
Cyprus	6,150	7,290	9,620	8,470
Finland	24,500	38,700	38,000	28,000
Malta	7,820	5,930	9,610	8,840
Norway	46,300	61,500	63,000	66,700
Sweden	79,600	118,000	114,000	106,000
Switzerland	43,900	69,600	78,600	63,500
Turkey	11,100	11,100	9,960	9,880
Yugoslavia	6,980	9,370	11,300	9,870
Western Europe (excluding EC)	247,000	351,000	385,000	324,000
Eastern Europe				
Bulgaria	660	1,230	1,450	2,200
Czechoslovakia	2,570	4,740	7,310	4,280
GDR	890	1,680	1,720	1,300
Hungary	3,040	5,090	7,620	4,580
Poland	8,040	12,400	15,500	7,540
Romania	400	490	870	620
USSR	2,420	4,860	7,880	6,790
Eastern Europe	18,000	30,500	42,400	27,300
Europe (excluding EC)	265,000	382,000	427,000	351,000
Americas				
Argentina	3,660	3,860	4,050	2,760
Barbados	450	1,350	2,580	900
Brazil	10,900	18,500	25,700	14,500
Canada	61,500	133,000	105,000	79,200
Chile	1,610	2,430	2,520	1,460
Colombia	1,760	3,880	4,350	2,410
Cuba	50	100	90	210
Guyana	450	870	1,540	770
Jamaica	2,330	4,880	7,140	3,220
Mexico	3,290	7,760	18,200	6,110
Peru	900	1,390	1,690	1,270
Trinidad and Tobago	1,020	2,330	3,770	1,980
United States of America	311,000	624,000	686,000	431,000
Uruguay	560	1,230	1,260	550
Venezuela	1,030	1,520	3,090	1,720
Americas	400,000	807,000	927,000	548,000
Africa				
Algeria	2,960	3,3007	6,180	3,410
Egypt	4,710	5,940	11,500	5,520
Ethiopia	620	870	1,500	850
Ghana	3,750	4,880	7,610	5,200
Kenya	3,160	5,180	8,4909	4,990
Libya	470	620	800	550
Mauritius	1,800	3,640	5,470	2,410
Morocco	2,300	2,860	5,350	3,560
Nigeria	14,400	20,600	25,800	18,300
Sierra Leone	980	1,200	2,560	1,470
Somalia	240	360	460	280
South Africa	15,400	27,300	29,600	19,100
Sudan	1,350	3,270	3,480	1,850
Tanzania	1,470	2,190	2,920	1,940
Tunisia	1,410	1,460	1,500	1,570
Uganda	1,130	1,720	2,480	1,790
Zambia	1,730	2,600	3,380	2,520
Zimbabwe	3,430	5,550	4,870	4,900
Africa	61,300	94,200	124,000	80,200
Asia				
Indian sub-continent				
Bangladesh	1,840	3,100	4,380	2,480
India	20,700	54,400	50,900	28,000
Pakistan	9,820	19,400	27,900	12,800
Indian sub-continent	32,400	76,900	83,200	43,300
Middle East				
Iran	4,250	4,470	7,340	4,660
Iraq	1,500	2,150	4,630	3,370
Israel	18,500	21,100	47,400	24,500
Jordan	2,480	3,130	4,880	2,680
Kuwait	4,170	6,230	15,100	3,800
Lebanon	3,090	3,610	5,630	3,430
Saudi Arabia	5,020	6,080	16,400	4,250
Syria	380	640	900	470
Middle East	39,400	47,700	102,000	47,100
Remainder of Asia				
China	2,210	3,000	3,250	2,280
Indonesia	1,150	3,810	4,480	2,090
Japan	124,000	102,000	143,000	119,000
Malaysia	5,310	10,700	12,300	10,800
Philippines	1,900	5,600	7,330	2,930
Singapore	3,570	12,000	8,450	7,340
Sri Lanka	1,770	3,360	4,890	2,960
Thailand	2,470	7,030	5,080	3,940
BDTC Hong Kong	7,660	9,060	15,200	7,440
Remainder of Asia	150,000	157,000	204,000	159,000
Asia	222,000	282,000	389,000	249,000
Australasia				
Australia	41,700	93,600	111,000	63,500
New Zealand	8,220	23,800	27,500	15,400
Australasia	49,900	117,000	138,000	78,900
British Overseas Citizens	1,160	2,770	3,990	1,990
Other countries not elsewhere specified	25,000	37,000	60,800	30,500
Stateless	8,520	14,700	31,900	10,800
All nationalities (excluding EC)	1,030,000	1,730,000	2,100,000	1,350,000

ENERGY

Low-energy Light Bulbs

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what representations he has received about the inclusion of low-energy light bulbs in the home energy efficiency scheme; and what has been his response.

Mr. Baldry: One respondent to the consultation paper on the home energy efficiency scheme (HEES) published earlier this year sought to have the provision of low-energy light bulbs brought within the scheme. HEES is being introduced under powers taken in section 15 of the Social Security Act 1990, which do not enable the scheme to be extended to cover grant for provision of low-energy lighting.

PowerGen

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what compensation has been awarded to Mr. Malpas, the ex-chairman of PowerGen; and how many years' salary it is equivalent to.

Mr. Baldry: The question of compensation is under discussion between PowerGen and Mr. Malpas.

Dounreay

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what long-term assessment he has made *(a)* of the consequences of current rundown at Dounreay for the United Kingdom's fuel requirements in the 21st century and *(b)* of Sir Frederick Warner's and Dr. Eric Vocie's evidence to the Select Committee on Energy in relation to Dounreay.

Mr. Baldry: I refer the hon. Member to the statement made by my predecessor on 21 July 1988 about the Government's review of the fast reactor programme. That review took full account of the position on uranium supplies in the next century.

North Sea Installations

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether there are any platforms on North sea installations on which full emergency shutdown valves have still to be fitted on risers as near to sea level as practicable.

Mr. Wakeham: My Department has identified 181 pipeline risers which require the fitting or relocation of emergency shutdown valves to comply with the Offshore Installations (Emergency Pipeline Valve) Regulations 1989. A total of 72 valves remain to be fitted or relocated.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) what was the ratio of injuries, excluding fatal injuries, suffered by operators' staff to those suffered by contractors' staff on North sea installations in each year since 1978;

(2) what was the ratio of fatal accidents suffered by operators' staff to those suffered by contractors' staff on North sea installations in each year since 1978.

Mr. Wakeham: The information requested by the hon. Member can be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy on how many risers on platforms in the North sea it is intended to retrofit subsea isolation valves; and how many of these have been fitted to date.

Mr. Wakeham: A total of 35 subsea isolation systems have been fitted retrospectively to existing pipelines and plans have been made for a further six systems to be so installed.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for En if he will list the platforms in the North sea which control systems of the same age as that on Piper Al

Mr. Wakeham: Control systems on offshore inst tions may be modified as technology develops. modifications are a matter for the operators and certifying authorities.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAI

Katyn Massacres

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for For and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statemer his Department's policy on ascribing responsibility fo Katyn massacres; and to whom he currently asc responsibility for the massacres.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Soviet authorities' admis in April that the NKVD (forerunner of the KGB) responsible for the massacre was very welcome.

Antarctica

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of Stat Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will see persuade the signatories to the Antarctic treaty to inst controls on the quantities of krill removed from Anta waters.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Fishing in Antarctic wate controlled by the convention on the conservatio Antarctic marine living resources (CCAMLR). Since CCAMLR has applied catch restrictions on certain stocks in Antarctica, and has closed some areas to pr depleted stocks. CCAMLR has been successfu achieving protection of the most threatened species an shall continue to work towards reaching an agreeme limit krill catches in Antarctic waters.

Dalai Lama

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of Stat Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will mee Dalai Lama when he comes to visit the United King in March.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My right hon. Friend the Secr of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs ha plans to do so.

Sudan

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of Stat Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what correspond he has received from Amnesty International conce *(a)* detention without trial, *(b)* incidences of torture *(c)* extra-judicial executions in Sudan; and if he will a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We are aware of Am International concerns about the abuse of human rig Sudan. We share those concerns and have made our known to the Sudanese authorities bilaterally, throug European Community and within the UN framewo

China

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if his Department's library will obtain a copy of the Amnesty International report concerning the treatment of pro-democracy leaders by the Chinese authorities, published on 14 November.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: A copy of this report is already held by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office library.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with his counterparts in China concerning treatment of pro-democracy leaders by the Chinese authorities.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We regularly raise the question of human rights with the Chinese authorities. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs expressed our concern to the Chinese Foreign Minister in September, as did the EC Troika.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his present policy in respect of *(a)* mining activities and *(b)* tourism in Antarctica; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Garel-Jones: We remain committed to achieving the best possible environmental protection for Antarctica from all forms of environmental damage. We do not support mining in Antarctica and wish to see the question of mineral activity resolved as soon as possible, by a return to consensus among the Antarctic treaty parties.

We think tourism and environmental protection can be compatible, but there is a need for regulation to avoid adverse environmental impact. The Antarctic treaty parties agreed to discuss tourism within the development of comprehensive measures for the protection of the Antarctic environment. A conference on this issue is currently taking place in Chile.

European Political Union

Mr. Knapman: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress was made during last month's European Council meeting in drawing up an agenda for the forthcoming EC intergovernmental conference on political union.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The Dublin European Council in June agreed that the intergovernmental conference on political union should adopt its own agenda. The 27-28 October European Council in Rome discussed the preparations for that IGC. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made a statement on the outcome of that meeting to the House on 30 October.

Coventry (Ministerial Visit)

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the visit to Coventry on 10 November of the Parliamentary Under-Secretary.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I attended a meeting of the Gulf support group in Coventry on 10 November for friends and relatives of those whom Saddam Hussein is preventing from leaving Kuwait and Iraq.

Following the meeting I attended evensong in Coventry cathedral at which prayers were said for the hostages and their families.

Mercenaries

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any proposals to implement the international convention against the recruitment, use, financing and training of mercenaries adopted by the United Nations in December 1989; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We are examining carefully the convention against the recruitment, use, financing and training of mercenaries against the background of current United Kingdom legislation. We hope to reach a decision soon.

Nuclear Test Ban

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the Government's policy in respect of negotiating the establishment of a comprehensive ban on all nuclear tests when they attend the conference in New York in January 1991.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: A comprehensive test ban remains a long-term goal to which progress will be made by only a step-by-step approach. This must take account of technical advances in verification as well as progress elsewhere in arms control and the attitudes of other states.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 26 November 1990

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Forces in Europe Treaty

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will publish a simplified, edited version of the treaty on conventional armed forces in Europe in booklet form.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: A booklet describing the main provisions of the treaty on conventional armed forces in Europe is being placed in the Library of the House. Further copies will be made available to hon. Members on request.

Israel

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made by Her Majesty's Government to the Government of Israel concerning the effect of the intifada upon British public opinion concerning Israel; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Government of Israel are well aware of the effect of the intifada, and their handling of it, on British public opinion. We make frequent representations to them on the need for them to meet their obligations under international law in administrating the occupied territories.

Romania

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will reconsider his policy of aid to eastern European countries to include family planning assistance to Romania.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Our policy towards aid to Romania for humanitarian purposes is unaffected by our policy towards long-term economic aid. We believe humanitarian aid should be unrestricted and have ourselves provided some £6·5 million directly and through the European Community. Our bilateral aid has included a family planning programme implemented by Marie Stopes International.

Estonia

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what response he made to the visit of Mr. Lennart Meri, Foreign Secretary of Estonia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Mr. right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and I held separate talks with Mr. Meri on 5 and 6 November. We emphasised that we had never recognised de jure the incorporation of the Baltic States into the USSR and that we continued to support the right of the Estonian people to decide their own future. As we told Mr. Meri, we believe that a negotiated outcome would be in the interests of both sides and hope that serious negotiations between Soviet and Baltic representatives will be resumed urgently. We agreed on the importance of developing and strengthening contacts between Britain and the Baltic states.

Lithuania

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what response he made to the visit of Mr. Landsbergis, President of Lithuania; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister had talks with Professor Landsbergis on 13 November. She emphasised that we had never recognised de jure the incorporation of the Baltic States into the USSR and that we continued to support the right of the Lithuanian people to decide their own future. She referred in her speech to the CSCE Paris summit to the particular position of the Baltic republics and to the need for a nogotiated settlement acceptable to both sides. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and Professor Landsbergis agreed on the importance of developing and strengthening contacts between Britain and the Baltic states.

Bulgaria

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he intends to make an award for humanitarian aid to the people of Bulgaria.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We are contributing to humanitarian aid for Bulgaria through the European Community's PHARE aid programme.

The European Community has recently approved a maternal and child health care support programme for Bulgaria worth approximately £3·5 million. We have encouraged the Commission to consider urgently Bulgarian requests for food assistance. These will be discussed during the meeting of the EC-Bulgaria joint commission on 30 November.

United States Nuclear Test Site (Arrests)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if Her Majesty's ambassador in Washington made any representations on behalf of Juley Howard, Jane Gregory and Lorna Richardson, each a British citizen, arrested in the United States Department of Energy research and test facility in Nevada on 14 November.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No representations have been made: the case is a matter for the United States authorities.

ENVIRONMENT

Homelessness

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has for action in relation to homeless single people in London, additional to that announced in his reply of 22 June, *Official Report*, column *738-40*.

Mr. Michael Spicer: In his autumn statement on 8 November, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the

Exchequer announced that, in addition to this year's provision of £15 million, a further £81 million would be provided over the next two years for single homeless people in London. The resources will meet the costs of additional short-term hostels for people currently on the streets and move-on accommodation for people in existing hostels.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what Government financial help is to be given this year to Crisis at Christmas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: We give no direct financial help to Crisis at Christmas and it has made no application for any from my Department. However, several of the voluntary organisations assisting Crisis at Christmas with the "Open Christmas" project receive grant from my Department under section 73 of the Housing Act 1985.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will amend the homelessness provisions to allow newly arrived single refugees to qualify for priority housing status on local authority waiting lists; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer *[holding answer 23 November 1990]:* No. It is for each local housing authority to decide its own priorities in the selection of its tenants, subject to the requirements of section 22 of the Housing Act 1985. It is also for authorities to decide whether single refugees applying as homeless under part III of that Act are vulnerable, and thus in priority need for accommodation.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make arrangements to ensure that housing authorities that experience higher than average numbers of housing requests from asylum seekers arriving in the United Kingdom are provided with additional financial resources to cope with any extra demand.

Mr. Michael Spicer *[holding answer 23 November 1990]:* Where a local housing authority in England experiences special needs which call for additional housing capital expenditure these needs will be taken into account by my Department in allocating housing investment programme (HIP) resources.

House Renovation Grants

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the effect of the new house renovation grant scheme on *(a)* the number of applications for house renovation grants, *(b)* the number of grants awarded and *(c)* the size of the grants awarded.

Mr. Key: From a sample survey of activity in 40 local housing authorities under the new grants system it is estimated that up to the end of September in England as a whole.

(a) 5,810 grant applications have been submitted, sub-divided as follows:

	Grant applications
Mandatory renovation grants	480
Discretionary renovation grants	60
Mandatory disabled facilities grants	230
Discretionary disabled facilities grants	
Houses in multiple occupation grant	
Minor works assistance	

(b) 4,450 grants have been awarded.

(c) The average size of minor works grant £620. The sample size is, as yet, too small to all estimates to be made of the average size of ren disabled facilities grants.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of St Environment (1) if he will list the relevant pop community charge purposes for each charging *(a)* calculated under the provisions of the Report (England) laid before the House on 11 Ja *(b)* calculated under the provisions of the draft Report (England) (No. 2) laid before the 31 October; if he will list the percentage differen the figures outlined in *(a)* and *(b)* above; if he w reasons for any percentage difference which ex cent.; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will list for each local authorit relevant population for community charge pu each charging authority calculated under the pr the Population Report (England) laid before th 11 January, *(b)* the relevant population for charge purposes for each charging authority under the provisions of the draft Populati (England) (No. 2) laid before the House on 31 O *(c)* the percentage difference between the fig and *(b)* above; if he will give the reason percentage difference over 5 per cent.; and if h a statement.

Mr. Key: I am arranging for the informa placed in the Library of the House. The popula are based on information about the number of the community charges register for each au supplied and certified by the relevant commun registration officer except in the case of the City and Welwyn Hatfield district council, where provisions of the Population Report (En 1990-91 relevant population was based on i from the Registrar General and other sources. reflect differences in the figures supplied excep two authorities.

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Secretary the Environment if he will list in the *Official* total number of community standard charge 1990-91 for each local authority in England.

Mr. Key: The available information was pl Library on 24 October.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of St Environment what are the current poll tax pa in each local authority area in England, as figures; and if he will indicate the numbers wh only one poll tax instalment in each instance.

Mr. Key: I am arranging for the informati to the Department about the percentage of charge payers in each authority who had mad

by 30 September, to be placed in the Library of the House. No information is available about the numbers of instalments paid.

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East of 20 November, *Official Report*, column *62*, when he expects to be in a position to give the same information as to the rate of collection of the poll tax for Birmingham.

Mr. Key: I understand that the council hopes to be able to provide the information shortly.

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 20 November to the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East, *Official Report*, column *62*. if he will now list for each local authority in England and Wales the available information as to the numbers of people who *(a)* have or *(b)* have not begun paying the poll tax and the percentage of the number of adults liable that represents.

Mr. Key: I am arranging for the information for England to be placed in the Library of the House. Figures for Wales are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East of 20 November, *Official Report*, column *62*, if he will now make it his practice to collect from local authorities information as to the numbers of people seriously in arrears with the poll tax; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: I have no plans to collect this information.

Nature Conservancy Council

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what was the budget for the Nature Conservancy Council for 1989-90 and the proposed budget for 1990-91;

(2) how much of the Nature Conservancy Council's budget for 1989-90, both in absolute and percentage terms, was spent in Scotland; and if he will give the same amounts for the proposed budget for 1990-91.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The grant-in-aid provided to the Nature Conservancy Council (NCC) in 1989-90 and 1990-91 was £40·15 million and £44·819 million (including £750,000 to cover initial reorganisation costs) respectively.

In 1989-90 £5·161 million—12·8 per cent.—of the grant-in-aid was spent by the NCC's Scottish Directorate. The proposed spend by the Scottish Directorate in 1990-91 is £4·999 million, 11·1 per cent. of total grant-in-aid. These figures do not include either the salaries of any permanent staff working on Scottish matters or funds spent by NCC Directorates which serve Great Britain as a whole, as these cannot be identified easily.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the amount of grant made by the Nature Conservancy Council under section 38 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 to voluntary conservation bodies for the purposes of land purchase in each of the last five years in 1989-90 prices.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory *[holding answer 23 November 1990]:* The figures requested are as follows:

	£ million
1985-86	0·69
1986-87	1·297
1987-88	1·289
1988-89	1·180
1989-90	0·586

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much money was spent by the Nature Conservancy Council for the purchase of national nature reserves in each of the last five years in 1989-90 prices.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory *[holding answer 23 November 1990]:* The figures requested are as follows:

	£ million
1985-86	2·564
1986-87	1·756
1987-88	1·353
1988-89	1·102
1989-90	0·182

Birds (Protected Species)

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the number of permits issued to falconers to take protected species of birds as quarry during 1989 and 1990 to date; what were the species in respect of which such permits were issued; and what were the number of each species so taken.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: In the 1989-90 season, 66 licences were issued to falconers in England, Scotland and Wales to take the following species: blackbird, skylark, black-headed gull, song thrush, mistle thrush, redwing, fieldfare and meadow pipit. The number of birds reported as taken are: blackbird 59, skylark 278, black-headed gull 1, song thrush 2, redwing 8 and fieldfare 10.

To date, 60 licences have been issued in the 1990-91 season to take the following species: blackbird, skylark, black-headed gull, song thrush and meadow pipit; the numbers of birds taken are not yet available.

National Gypsy Council

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will place in the Library audited accounts of the National Gypsy Council for the years 1979 to 1989.

Mr. Key: No. My Department receives copies of the National Gypsy Council's audited accounts, for monitoring purposes, as a condition of the grant which we pay to the council; but it is not for us to make those accounts public.

Oxleas Wood, London

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what communications he has recently received from the European Environment Commissioner concerning the future of Oxleas wood in south-east London.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: None.

Mountain Hare

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what measures are currently being proposed by the European Community for the protection of the species and habitat of lepus timidus; how he has responded to such measures; and whether he proposes any relevant changes to United Kingdon legislation.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The lepus timidus is one of the species listed on annex III of the European Commission's proposal for a directive on the protection of natural and semi-natural habitats and of fauna and flora. Under the draft directive, any exploitation of lepus timidus would therefore be subject to a management plan. Negotiations on the directive in Brussels are currently stalled, but when they resume we expect to press the Commission to clarify what is expected of member states under this provision. It is therefore premature to consider whether changes to United Kingdom legislation would be appropriate.

Birds of Prey

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what were the number of licences issued in each of England, Scotland and Wales to possess birds of prey; and what were the numbers of birds of each species currently held under such licence.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Since the beginning of 1989, the Department has issued 11 licences to possess birds of prey which were either found abandoned or which had been seized by enforcement authorities after being taken illegally from the wild.

Only one bird, a golden eagle, is currently held under such a licence.

Bracken

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on current research into biological methods of controlling bracken.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: My Department is aware of research by Professor Lawton of Imperial college at Silwood Park with a non-indigenous moth, Conservula cinsigna, which has a bracken-feeding caterpillar. Professor Lawton has applied for a licence under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, to release the moth in outdoor cages on the college premises. The application is under consideration.

Fire Regulations

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment for what reasons the Fire Brigades Union, the Chief and Assistant Chief Fire Officers Association, and the National Association of Fire Officers were not included in the list of bodies to whom the consultation letter was sent by his Department in respect of the Fire and Building Regulations proposed procedural guidance document of 17 October; what alternative arrangements were made to consult these bodies; and if any response has yet been received from them.

Mr. Key: All the member bodies of the joint fire prevention committee of the Central Fire Brigades Advisory Council, which includes those bodies referred to by the hon. Member, were sent a copy of Building Regulations proposed procedu document by the Home Office. I understand no response has been received from any of

Nature Conservancy Agencies

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of Environment (1) when he expects to ma decision on the resources available to the conservancy agencies;

(2) what resources he estimates will be re new agencies of the Nature Conservancy commence operations; and what resources available to fill these posts.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: My right hon. Secretary of State for the Environment ann November that grant-in-aid for the Conservancy Council for England (NCCE) has been set provisionally at £32·411 milli allow the NCCE not only to undertake the conservation activities inherited from Conservancy Council but also to add to them them significantly.

Announcements about the grant-in-aid t to the new Councils in Scotland and Wales a my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State and for Wales respectively.

The staffing resources needed by the three in 1991-92 were described by the noble Lad statement made during Report stage of the E Protection Act in another place on 17 Oct columns 895-97. It is primarily the respon new councils to ensure that sufficient staff are they assume their full functions and duties.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of Environment if he will set out the terms of re Joint Committee on Nature Conservation.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The statutory fu three new country agencies which are to through the joint nature conservation com out in section 133 of the Environmental P 1990. It is for the JNCC in the first instance detailed programme within the provisions o

Bailiffs

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of Environment (1) what plans he has to Community Charges (Administration and Regulations 1989 to bring the controls on ba the community charge into line with thos distress for rent; and if he will make a stat

(2) if he will monitor items recovered pursuit of debts owed to local authorities items subject to hire purchase or credit sal are not included in such actions; and if h statement;

(3) what plans he has to ensure that befo action to recover debts owed to local au mentally or physically disabled people, or f hospital or with a language difficulty, they the local authority concerned;

(4) what plans he has to introduce a co governing the manner in which local a bailiffs; and if he will make a statement;

(5) what steps he takes to ensure that bailiffs used by local authorities make reasonable efforts to contact debtors; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: My Department has no plans to change existing regulations on the employment of bailiffs by local authorities. We have issued a practice note to all charging authorities advising them to check the reputation, qualifications and expertise of private firms and to issue guidelines to them on procedures. I understand that the Institute of Revenues, Rating and Valuation (IRRV) will shortly be incorporating this advice in a revised practice note which contains additional guidance on property and rights of entry. The Institute of Revenues, Rating and Valuation is also preparing a code of practice for discussion amongst local authority associations and the Certified Bailiffs Association which I welcome.

Spent Nuclear Fuel

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the report which he received several months ago concerning the management and disposal of radioactive spent nuclear fuel.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Two reports have been produced over the last three years concerning the management and disposal of spent nuclear fuel. These are DOE RW87/125 entitled "Magnox fuel dry storage and direct disposal", and DOE RW89/089 entitled "Packaging, storage and direct disposal of spent AGR fuel". Both reports are available from the National Lending Library.

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he received the official advice that spent fuel from nuclear reactors would be better put into long-term dry storage then sent for reprocessing; and what account he took of the advice.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I have received no such advice.

National Insurance

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of the net additional cost to local authorities of the changes to employers' national insurance contributions and reimbursement announced in the autumn statement.

Mr. Portillo: We do not collect the data which would enable us to predict with any accuracy the extent to which the changes in the level of statutory sick pay reimbursement and reductions in employers' national insurance contributions will cancel each other out for individual authorities. However, the reduction in reimbursements of statutory sick pay represents less than 0·1 per cent. of the total of employers' labour costs.

Housing Action Trusts

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list any current proposals for housing action trusts still under discussion.

Mr. Key: Discussions are proceeding with the Council and tenants in the London borough of Waltham Forest and Hull city council are consulting tenants about the council's proposal for a housing action trust for the North Hull estate.

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much money in total his Department has spent on promoting housing action trusts.

Mr. Key: No expenditure has been incurred on promoting housing action trusts. In pursuance of the statutory duty under the Housing Act 1988 to hold a ballot of tenants and the need to ensure that the tenants are fully informed of the proposals expenditure of £93,000 has been incurred relating to information material and to ballots.

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list any proposals for housing action trusts which have been the subject of a ballot of tenants and the results.

Mr. Key: The Electoral Reform Society ran ballots on behalf of the Secretary of State in Sunderland and Southwark.

The results were as follows:

	In favour of the HAT	*Opposed to the HAT*
Sunderland	862	3,506
Southwark	496	1,164

Wild Birds

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all those sites in England which have been either designated or proposed for designation as *(a)* special protection areas under the EC directive on the conservation of wild birds or *(b)* Ramsar sites under the convention of wetlands of international importance.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory *[holding answer 23 November 1990]:* The following table lists all those sites in England which have to date been formally proposed to Government as either special protection areas or Ramsar sites (or both), indicating where appropriate the date of designation.

Proposed/designated SPA/RAMSAR sites in England

Site	*Designated SPA*	*Designated RAMSAR*	*Proposed SPA*	*Proposed RAMSAR*
Upper Solway Flats and Marshes	P 1 October 1986	P 1 October 1986	P yes	P yes
Irthinghead Mires	n.a.	17 July 1985	—	—
Esthwaite Water	n.a.	—	yes	—
Leighton Moss	28 November 1985	28 November 1985	—	—
Bowland Fells	—	n.a.	yes	—
Ribble Estuary	31 August 1982	n.a.	—	—
Alt Estuary	28 November 1985	28 November 1985	—	—
Martin Mere	28 November 1985	28 November 1985	—	—
Lindisfarne	—	P 5 January 1976	yes	P yes
Farne Islands	17 July 1985	n.a.	—	—

Site	Designated SPA	Designated RAMSAR	Proposed SPA	Proposed RAMSAR
Coquet Island	17 July 1985	n.a.	—	—
Holburn Moss	17 July 19[illegible]	17 July 1985	—	—
Moor House	31 August 1982	n.a.	—	—
Derwent Ings	17 July 1985	17 July 1985	—	—
Humber Flats, Marsh and Coast	—	—	yes	yes
Mersey Estuary	—	—	yes	yes
Rostherna Mere	n.a.	24 July 1981	—	—
Walmore Common	—	—	yes	yes
Rutland Water	—	—	yes	yes
Ouse Washes	—	5 January 1976	yes	—
The Wash	31 March 1988	31 March 1988	—	—
North Norfolk Coast	20 January 1989	20 January 1989	—	—
Bure Marshes	n.a.	5 January 1976	—	—
Hickling Broad and Horsey Mere	n.a.	5 January 1976	—	—
Redgrave and South Lopham Fens	n.a.	—	—	yes
Minsmere-Walberswick	—	P 5 January 1976	yes	—
Orfordness-Havergate	P 31 August 1982	n.a.	—	—
Chippenham Fen	n.a.	—	—	yes
Stour and Orwell Estuary	—	—	yes	yes
Abberton Reservoir	—	24 July 1981	yes	—
Benfleet and Southend Marshes	—	—	yes	yes
Exe Estuary	—	—	yes	yes
Chew Valley Lakes	17 July 1985	n.a.	—	—
Chesil Beach and The Fleet	17 July 1985	17 July 1985	—	—
New Forest	—	—	yes	yes
Chichester and Langstone Harbours	28 October 1987	28 October 1987	—	—
Pagham Harbour	30 April 1988	30 April 1988	—	—
Medway Estuary and Marshes	—	—	yes	yes
The Swale	17 July 1985	17 July 1985	—	—
Dee Estuary	17 July 1985	17 July 1985	—	—
Bridgewater Bay	n.a.	5 January 1976	—	—
Severn Estuary	P 5 February 1988	P 5 February 1988	P yes	P yes

Notes:
n.a.—Not applicable.
P— Part of site.

London Residuary Body

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will assess the likely impact on 1991 levels of poll tax in London boroughs due to the inability of the London residuary body to make available the promised £155·5 million arising from the sale of county hall; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key *[holding answer 23 November 1990]:* The effect on the community charge will depend on decisions taken by London boroughs in the light of the failure of the County Hall Development Group to complete the purchase of county hall. In setting their budgets it is for boroughs to decide what account, if any, they should take of capital receipts not yet to hand.

Crookston Station

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made to date on the consideration by his Department's inquiry reporter of the appeal against planning refusal for the demolition of the listed building known as Crookston Station.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I have been asked to reply.

The papers in connection with this appeal are presently with the Scottish Office inquiry reporters unit and in common with most planning appeals it is proposed that this case be determined by a reporter acting under delegated powers. This appeal is due to be heard at public local inquiry along with an associated planning appeal in respect of proposed residential development on the site of the old station.

As Glasgow has many appeal cases, it is not possible to fix an inquiry date before February.

It is expected that a suitable date can be arranged towards the end of February 1990.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Libel

Mr. Snape: To ask the Attorney-General when the recommendation in the Faulks committee report 1977 that the defence of innocent dissemination should be available to printers in libel cases will be implemented.

The Attorney-General: In a consultation paper published in July 1990 the Lord Chancellor invited views on whether the defence of innocent dissemination should be made available to printers. The consultation period has recently ended, and he is now considering the responses he has received.

Law Centres

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Attorney-General what consideration he has given to providing national funding for law centres.

The Attorney-General: The Lord Chancellor has asked the Legal Aid Board to consider the position of law centres in the context of improving access to legal services generally.

Bailiffs

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Attorney-General if he will set upper limits on the expenses which bailiffs may claim against debtors; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell on 21 November 1990 at column *125*. There are at present no plans to increase the fees, charges and expenses which may be recovered under the Distress for Rent Rules 1988.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Attorney-General (1) if he will establish a unit to receive complaints against private bailiffs and advertise its address and telephone number to the public;

(2) what steps he takes to consult consumers' organisations and advice agencies before agreeing to changes in the charges imposed by bailiffs; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) on 21 November 1990 at column *125*.

Belmarsh Prison (Court Complex)

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Attorney-General when he now expects the court complex associated with Her Majesty's prison Belmarsh to be in operation.

The Attorney-General: The contractor's programme, together with a period for fitting out the building, provides that the Crown court at Woolwich will be in operation in October 1992.

TRANSPORT

Public Transport, London

2. **Mr. Ground:** To ask Secretary of State for Transport what measures are planned to improve public transport in London.

Mr. Parkinson: We have set the public transport operators two challenges. To improve every aspect of their existing services; and to achieve historic increases in capacity. To these ends we have set tough quality of service objectives; massively increased the resources available for investment; and approved the building of major new lines. And we have announced legislation designed to create the clear roads needed to run attractive bus services.

New Motorways

12. **Mr. Knox:** To ask Secretary of State for Transport how much has been spent on new motorway construction in each of the past four years at constant prices.

Mr. Chope: Capital expenditure on motorways, at 1990-91 prices, was £466 million in 1986-87, £398 million in 1987-88, £459 million in 1988-89 and £576 million in 1989-90.

Road Safety

13. **Mr. David Davis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what measures are being taken to educate children in road safety.

Mr. McLoughlin: We believe all schools should teach road safety as an integral part of the national curriculum. We have a wide range of teaching material and are developing guidelines to help local authorities organise road safety education in schools.

Official Visits

14. **Mr. Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will pay an official visit to Southend-on-Sea by train.

Mr. Freeman: I have written to my hon. Friend that I should be happy to do so.

Transport Expenditure

15. **Dr. Michael Clark:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport by how much expenditure on transport will increase over the next three years.

Mr. Parkinson: In the areas where I have responsibility investment on transport will increase from some £9½ billion in the three years to April 1991 to nearly £16 billion in the three years to April 1994.

Bus Services

16. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received regarding bus services in rural areas and off-peak hours.

Mr. McLoughlin: I have received very few representations about bus services in rural areas and in off-peak hours. Bus mileage overall has increased by 19 per cent. and local authorities are able to subsidise those socially necessary services which are not provided by operators on a commercial basis.

Rail Freight

17. **Mr. Robert Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what recent discussions he has had with British Rail on rail freight infrastructure.

Mr. Freeman: We are continuing to encourage British Rail to build on the strengths of rail freight, which are primarily in bulk trainload traffic. Where there are sound commercial prospects, we are backing the necessary investment. In the autumn statement we have endorsed over £600 million of investment in rail freight over the next three years.

Light Rapid Transit (Nottingham)

18. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assistance his Department has given to the proposal for a light rapid transit system in Nottingham.

Mr. McLoughlin: Officials in the Department of Transport have had a number of discussions with the promoters of this project on how best to work up their proposals.

Bedford Bypass

19. **Sir Trevor Skeet:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are his current plans for bypassing Bedford; and if he will make a statement on the timetable.

Mr. Chope: My Department has two schemes for bypassing Bedford—Bedford southern bypass and Bedford western bypass.

Tenders for the construction of Bedford southern bypass are programmed to be invited in 1992. The scheme is due to be completed in 1995, following a two-year construction period. The programme for a Bedford western bypass depends largely on the outcome of our consideration of the results of Bedfordshire county and North Bedfordshire borough council's public consultation exercise on an outer western option, together with analysis of recent traffic survey data. We expect to announce the results of that consideration early next year.

Transport Investment

20. **Mr. Knapman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what he estimates will be the total level of transport investment in the United Kingdom, in real terms, over the next three years; and what were the comparable figures for the last three years.

Mr. Parkinson: In the areas where I have responsibility, approximately 14 billion pounds at 1990-91 prices is planned in the next three years compared with some 10 billion pounds in the last three years.

Humber Bridge

21. **Mr. Cran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the latest estimate he has as to the current level of debt being carried by the Humber bridge board.

Mr. Chope: The debt on the Humber bridge at 31 March 1990 was about £373 million.

British Rail (West Midlands)

22. **Mr. Conway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the public subsidy to the British Rail provincial network in the west midlands sector in 1979 and 1989.

Mr. McLoughlin: The public service obligation grant payable to British Rail is a block grant, and cannot be attributed to any individual area of service. Services in the area covered by the west midlands passenger transport authority are subsidised by them under section 20 of the Transport Act 1968. In 1989-90 this subsidy totalled more than £12 million.

Bus Routes, London

23. **Ms. Ruddock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he next plans to meet the chair of the London Buses board to discuss bus routes in London.

Mr. Freeman: My right hon. Friend and I have regular meetings with the chairmen of London Transport and London Buses Limited. Both the Government and London Transport believe that buses have a major contribution to make to meeting London's public transport needs, and we frequently discuss ways of furthering this goal.

Road Casualties

24. **Mr. John P. Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking to meet his road casualty reduction target of a reduction in road casualties by one third by the year 2000.

Mr. Chope: I set out in the road safety debate on 16 November the wide range of measures which we have in hand for reducing road accident casualties.

British Rail (Investment)

25. **Mr. Holt:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much British Rail will invest over the next three years; and what were the comparable figures for the previous three years.

Mr. Freeman: We have given British Rail an investment ceiling of £4 billion cash over the next three years. This represents £3·65 billion at 1990-91 prices, a 58 per cent. real increase on the comparable figure, £2·3 billion, for the previous three years.

London Transport (Investment)

26. **Mr. Tim Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much London Transport will invest over the next three years.

Mr. Freeman: Approaching £3 billion. That is equivalent to well over £400 per head for every man, woman and child in the greater London area.

Channel Tunnel

27. **Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what estimates he has of the average speed of *(a)* passenger and freight trains running between Glasgow and the continent once the channel tunnel is open and *(b)* TGV trains between Lille, Lyon and Paris running to Britain.

Mr. Freeman: The average speed for the proposed Glasgow to Paris night sleeper will be about 65 mph. Convenient departure and arrival times will matter more than speed. The average speed of passenger trains between Lille and London will be 90 mph, between Paris and London 100 mph, and on the daytime through service between Paris and Edinburgh will be 85 mph. SNCF do not propose to run direct services from Lyon to London. International freight trains will be able to travel both in the United Kingdom and in France at a maximum speed of 75 mph.

Regional Airports

28. **Mr. Amos:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on his policy towards greater use of regional airports.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Government encourage the maximum use of regional airports, both to meet local demand and to relieve pressure on the London airports.

Over the past decade some £450 million of capital expenditure has been facilitated through special borrowing approvals for the development of local authority airports. Special borrowing approvals totalling £59 million are available for 1990-91, facilitating investment which the

airports concerned estimate could total some £149 million this year. For 1991-92 £87 million worth of special borrowing approvals will be available, facilitating investment which the airports concerned estimate could total some £179 million in that year.

We also very much welcome the contribution to the development of local authority airports which the private sector already makes through direct investment and joint venture schemes; and we continue to look to the airports concerned and their local authority owners to take full account of the opportunities for private sector involvement as they formulate their plans for further expansion.

The working group now being established to take forward the Civil Aviation Authority's recent advice on long term United Kingdom airport capacity is to examine regional airports, role in meeting overall growth in demand into the next century.

We are continuing to pursue liberalisation policies, both in the European Community and in bilateral negotiations, which increase further the scope for services from our regional airports.

Black Country Spine Road

Mr. Snape: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has yet concluded his financial review of the black country spine road between West Bromwich and Wednesbury; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: The review is making good progress but is not yet complete. A decision will be announced as soon as possible.

Road Casualties

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list in tabular form the number of road deaths for each year from 1970 to 1989, inclusive, showing *(a)* total figures and *(b)* by category of (i) car drivers, (ii) car passengers, (iii) lorry drivers, (iv) lorry passengers, (v) motor cyclists, (vi) motor cycle passengers, (vii) other occupants of motor vehicles, (viii) cyclists, (ix) pedestrians, (x) bus drivers and (xi) bus passengers.

Mr. Chope: I have placed a copy of the information requested in the Library.

RAF Bentwaters

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will indicate the cost of road realignments and improvements which affect access to RAF Bentwaters in Suffolk.

Mr. Chope: Improvements planned in the vicinity of the base are on the A1152 road for which Suffolk county council is the local highway authority.

My Department will ask the council to provide the hon. Member with the information requested.

Dock Workers

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many dockers are employed in handling coal produced in Britain.

Mr. McLoughlin: No information is collected centrally about the number of dock workers handling specific commodities. In 1989, there were five ports at which British coal accounted for over 40 per cent. by weight of goods loaded in the port: Tyne, Blyth, Ayr, Garston and Workington. These ports accounted for 84 per cent. of the coal shipped from all British ports. The latest available survey of port manpower, carried out in March 1989, showed that 308 dock workers were employed in these ports.

Public Service Vehicles

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to publicise clause 4 of the Public Service Vehicles (Conduct of Drivers, Inspectors, Conductors and Passengers) Regulations 1990.

Mr. Freeman: Regulation 4 was fully publicised in the Press Notice issued on 11 May 1990 when the regulations were laid before Parliament. Publicity was also given in the trade press. I have no plans for further publicity.

Fishing Boat Antares

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make an urgent statement on the incident involving the fishing boat Antares and a royal naval submarine off the coast of Arran in the early morning of 22 November; if he will institute an inquiry into the incident; and what action he is now taking to ensure there are no further similar incidents.

Mr. McLoughlin: My hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces made a statement to the House on 23 November about this incident. An inspector from the marine accident investigation branch commenced an inquiry into the circumstances surrounding the loss of the fishing vessel Antares on the same day. A separate inquiry is being carried out by the Royal Navy. The results of these inquiries will be given urgent consideration to see what lessons can be learnt.

Airports, South-East

Mr. Jacques Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what further steps have been taken towards identifying possible locations for additional runway capacity to serve the south-east, following the publication by the Civil Aviation Authority in CAP 570 of advice on the adequacy of airport capacity in the longer term.

Mr. Parkinson: I announced in July my intention to establish a working group to examine the wider implications of development at airports identified by the Civil Aviation Authority in CAP 570 as likely to be able in air traffic control terms to accommodate additional air traffic. Work has since been going forward on the group's terms of reference, structure and membership.

I have concluded that the terms of reference for the group should be:

"To evaluate the wider implications of developing additional runway capacity at the sites identified by the Civil Aviation Authority in Cap 570 as likely to be feasible for such development in air traffic control and airspace terms;

"To have regard to the considerations, including the environmental considerations, which led the Government in 1985 to the view that second runways should not be built at either Gatwick or Stansted; and to the relevance of those considerations at Heathrow and at other airports;

"To test the Authority's conclusions in CAP 570 on the contribution of regional airports, and to gauge the extent to which these airports can play a part in meeting the overall demand into the next century;

"And in the light of these considerations to advise the Secretary of State on the possible courses".

I intend that the group should be chaired by a senior official from my department, and that it should be assisted by four subgroups addressing, for each of the locations identified in CAP 570, the implications for regional development and the environment; for aircraft noise; for surface access; and capital costs, lead times and other practical and technical considerations. The first of these subgroups will be chaired by the Department of the Environment, the second and third by my own department and the last by the CAA.

Invitations to join the working group or one of its subgroups have today been sent to a variety of organisations. We have asked SERPLAN to co-ordinate the local authority input, and have also sought the involvement of the Kent Economic Development Board. To represent the interests of airports we have issued invitations to the Airport Operators Association, BAA plc and the Joint Airports Committee of Local Authorities. We have in particular asked JACOLA to take the lead in assessing the contribution of regional airports. The International Air Transport Association, the International Air Carrier Association and the British Air Transport Association have been invited to represent airlines.

We have asked the Association of British Travel Agents, the British Tourist Authority and the Air Transport Users Committee to represent, respectively, the interests of the travel and tourism industries and of consumers of air services (passenger and cargo).

To ensure a thorough examination of the important environmental implications of airport development we have extended invitations to a number of bodies and organisations. These are the Federation of Heathrow Anti-Noise Groups; the Gatwick Area Conservation Campaign, the North West Essex and East Herts Preservation Association; and the Airfield Environment Federation. We have also invited the participation of the chairmen of the consultative committees at each of the airports in question.

The local management of the different airports have been asked to contribute to the work of the airport technical subgroup, and British Rail and London Regional Transport have been invited to join the subgroup which will consider surface access. Finally, the working group will involve officials from the CAA and from the trade and industry, employment, defence and agriculture departments, as well as from my own department and the Department of the Environment.

I am confident that the expertise of those we have invited will enable the group to engage fully with the many issues it will address. Inevitably, it has not been possible to offer places to all of those wishing to participate. I hope that many of those not included will be able to put views forward through the various representative organisations on the group. I also intend to initiate shortly a wider, written consultation, to ensure the group has access to the views of others with an interest in the issues. The results of this consultation will be an important contribution to the group's work.

Once we have heard from those invited to join the group arrangements can go forward for the first of the meetings. I expect this to take place early next year.

London Underground (Crime)

Sir David Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State f Transport if he will provide the figures for the number violent crimes committed on the London underground f the years 1989 and 1990; and if he will list the initiativ that have been taken by London Underground to redu the incidence of violent crime.

Mr. Freeman: I understand from the British Transpo Police that in 1989 there were 1,755 crimes of violence the London underground. During that time some 7 million passenger journeys were made. In the 10 months 31 October 1990, the number of crimes of violence w 1,137. This represents a 22 per cent. reduction compar with the same period for 1989 and continues t downward trend for such crimes. Crimes of violence ha been defined as robbery and assaults on passengers, st and police.

A programme of passenger security measures has be introduced at thirteen pilot scheme stations on t Northern line, Central line and at Oxford Circus to asse the effectiveness of various anti-crime measures at differe types of station. These involve:

—trained staff with personal radios
—help-point booths
—passenger help-point alarm panels
—closed circuit television and video monitoring
—supervised safe waiting areas
—mirrors and improved lighting

Similiar measures will be implemented in 1991 stations between Hammersmith and Paddington on t Hammersmith and City line. London Underground is al planning to extend these measures to other statio throughout the network. In addition a new communic tion network is being provided at 123 stations which w enable the police to use radios underground. T complement of the British Transport Police's (BT London Underground division has been increased to 4 and area police stations established. These enhancemer enable the BTP to mount increased numbers of patr which, together with the new culture of co-operati between staff and the BTP, will improve the effectiven of community policing on the Underground.

London Underground (Grant)

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State f Transport what is the total Government grant to Lond Underground in the current financial year; how much will be in 1991-92; and how much of this grant has been aside for the repair of escalators.

Mr. Freeman: Total grant to London Transport, 1990-91 will be £474 million. In 1991-92 it will be £6 million. It is for London Transport to decide how t grant should be distributed to its subsidiaries, and it is London Underground to decide how much to spend on repair of escalators. The Government do not earma specific amounts of grant for specific purposes. understand that in 1990-91 London Underground v spend approximately £11 million on the repair escalators.

Winchester Bypass

Mr. Hill: To ask the Secretary of State for Transp what are the fatality figures, including major injuries, o the last 10 years on the Winchester bypass.

Mr. Chope: The number of recorded accidents, in the stated categories, on the A33 Winchester bypass from its junction with the A27 (M3) to A31 Compton in each of the last six years were:

Year	*Fatal injuries*	*Serious injuries*
1984	2	8
1985	3	8
1986	0	12
1987	1	5
1988	1	3
1989	1	3

Figures for years before 1984 are not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

M3

Mr. Hill: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the current approximate date for the completion of the entire M3 motorway; and if he will take steps to prevent any further delays.

Mr. Chope: The section of M3 at present under construction between Compton and Bassett is expected to be completed in autumn next year. Subject to completion of the remaining statutory procedures we will start work on the final section at Winchester as soon as possible which unfortunately cannot now be until 1992.

Road Journey Times

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the average time taken on a daytime car journey between central London and central Birmingham; what was the corresponding time in 1975, 1980 and 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: My Department does not have estimates of these journey-times, for 1990 or for the earlier years mentioned.

Roadside Crash Cushions

Mr. Day: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his policy on the use of roadside crash cushions and the development of an appropriate performance specification for roadside crash cushions.

Mr. Chope: The policy for crash cushions, as for any road safety equipment, is to provide such equipment where it can be shown to be cost-effective to do so, to a performance specification consistent with our international obligations and agreements.

Air Traffic Controllers

Mr. Day: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if any action has been taken following the report of the committee looking into the control of fatigue amongst air traffic controllers.

Mr. McLoughlin: The statutory responsibility for the safety regulation of United Kingdom civil aviation rests with the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA). I am advised by the CAA that all air traffic control units within the United Kingdom have been informed that a scheme to regulate controllers' hours based on the CRATCOH report, will be implemented on 1 October 1991. A letter of intent to implement such regulations was despatched by the CAA in September 1990. One year has been allowed in order that ATC may bring their staff levels up to the strength recommended in the report.

British Rail Hotels

Mr. Gregory: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if British Rail has any plans to sell its remaining hotel interests; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: British Rail still owns the freeholds of 11 hotels. Nine, all at stations, are leased to the private sector on 125-year leases. British Rail considers it essential to retain the freeholds in case it becomes necessary to carry out work on the stations. The other two hotels are the Great Northern at King's Cross and the Great Eastern at Liverpool Street both in London. Management of both these hotels is contracted to the private sector. British Rail's plans for the passenger concourse at King's Cross would require the demolition of the Great Northern hotel. British Rail does not consider it opportune to dispose of the Great Eastern hotel at present, but will be looking carefully at the possibility of doing so as development work is completed at Liverpool Street station and on the Broadgate site.

Kuwaiti Aircraft

Mr. Warren: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has made the necessary arrangements to seize any of the Kuwaiti transport aircraft which have been taken from Kuwait by the Iraqi Government if they enter United Kingdom air space or territory; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: Arrangements have been made for any such aircraft found at an airport in this country to be detained and returned to its owners.

British Airways Aircraft, Kuwait

Mr. Warren: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has made to the International Civil Aviation Organisation about the hijacking of the British Airways 747 aircraft and its passengers and crew by the Iraqi Government at Kuwait airport on 2 August.

Mr. McLoughlin: The British delegation to the International Civil Aviation Organisation raised this matter at the October ICAO Assembly. The delegation called on the Iraqis to release the passengers and crew of the British Airways flight. In a resolution adopted condemning the plunder of Kuwait international airport the delegation secured the inclusion of wording calling upon Iraq to facilitate the early recovery by their owners of foreign-registered aircraft stranded at the airport.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Civil Defence

Mr. Bill Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many civil servants are currently employed *(a)* full time and *(b)* part time by his Department on civil defence; what the total costs of employing staff on civil defence duties were in 1989-90;

what the total costs of employing staff on civil defence duties are expected to be in 1990-91; and whether he has any plans for these staff to be transferred to work on other duties.

Mr. Leigh: The information requested is as follows:

Number of staff employed full-time 16 November 1990	*Number of staff employed part-time 16 November 1990*	*Total estimated cost 1989-90*	*Total estimated cost 1990-91*
		£	£
1	6	247,300	112,000

The lower estimated costs for 1990-91 result from reductions both planned and already made in the staffing provision for civil defence work. The staff concerned have been or will be transferred to other work. Further consideration will be given to staffing and expenditure on this work when my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary has completed the review, which he announced on 16 October, of the options for civil defence arrangements in the light of east-west relations.

Recycling

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what incentives he will bring forward to persuade industry to use recyclable materials.

Mr. Leigh: My Department fully recognises the importance of providing outlets for recycled materials, and that industry should use materials which are themselves recyclable, in order to ensure the achievement of the Government's recycling targets. We have taken, and are continuing to take, a wide range of initiatives to this end. These include conferences and literature to encourage businesses to design products with recycling in mind; assisting the development of new industry standards to encourage the use of recyclable and recycled products; and, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced on 27 September, the introduction of new schemes of support for businesses in the environmental area which embrace recycling technology. In addition, we are commissioning research activity to identify the scope for greater use and application of recyclable materials, and we are in active discussion with many industrial sectors to identify ways to stimulate recycling.

Audit Procedures

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will bring forward legislation to require firms auditing a public limited company to file information with regulatory bodies.

Mr. Redwood: We have no such plans. However, I expect that all applications for recognition from supervisory bodies for auditors under the Companies Act 1989 will include requirements as to the filing of information with them by audit firms.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether his Department makes any financial contribution towards the running of the Auditing Practices Committee.

Mr. Redwood: No.

ECGD

Mr. Grylls: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade Industry if he will take steps to ensure that Export Cre Guarantee Department's claims outstanding from s and medium sized firms as a result of the Gulf crisis dealt with as fast as possible.

Mr. Sainsbury: ECGD is examining claims as fas possible within the terms of its guarantees with objective of making payments in respect of valid claim exporters at the end of the appropriate claims wai period.

Children's Clothing (Safety)

Mr. Hill: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade Industry what safety regulations apply to childr nightdresses and pyjamas; and what recent cases t have been whereby injury has been caused to children to the lack of flame retardants in these articles of cloth

Mr. Leigh: Under the Nightwear (Safety) Regulat 1985 (as amended in 1987) children's nightdresses r pass a test for low flammability. Pyjamas do not hav comply with the flammability standard, but they r carry a permanent label showing whether or not they r that standard. Garments can achieve low flammab through use of fabrics which are inherently fire resistar by adding a fire retardant treatment to the fabric.

My Department's home accident surveillance sys (HASS) monitors accidents receiving attention at accident and emergency departments of 22 hospital England and Wales. HASS statistics for 1988 (the l year for which data is complete) record two acciden which children required hospital treatment for l injuries after their nightwear caught fire. In one case child was wearing pyjamas and in the other a nightc was being worn. There is no record in these partic cases whether or not the garments were flame retar

Motor Vehicle Manufacturing Industry

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State Trade and Industry if he will give an estimate of number of people employed in the United Kingdom m vehicle manufacturing industry in each year since 1 and if he will make a statement concerning Governm policy towards that industry.

Mr. Leigh: The number of people employed in United Kingdom motor vehicle manufacturing indust shown in the table.

Government policy for the motor industry, as industry as a whole, is to set the framework for free fair competition and the encouragement of enterpris

Numbers employed in the United Kingdom motor vehicle manufacturing industry 1979-90

Year	*Employees (Thousands)*
June	
1979	466·3
1980	437·1
1981	365·7
1982	318·0
1983	299·0
1984	280·8
1985	274·0
1986	265·8

Year	Employees (Thousands)
1987	260·0
1988	269·1
1989	270·8
1990	268·3

Note:

The employment figures are those under the Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) heading 35, "Motor vehicles and their parts". Thus the figures include employees in the large automotive components sector. However, the actual employment figure will be higher when taking into account the manufacture of components not separately identifiable as specific to the motor industry.

Steel Industry

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will give an estimate of the number of people employed in the United Kingdom steel industry in each year since 1979; and if he will make a statement concerning Government policy towards that industry.

Mr. Leigh: The Department of Employment estimate the number of people employed in the United Kingdom steel industry in each year since 1979 as:

Year	Employees (Thousands)
June	
1979	422·1
1980	383·6
1981	314·0
1982	284·9
1983	284·4
1984	240·2
1985	231·6
1986	215·1
1987	206·3
1988	209·5
1989	215·7
1990	216·0

The figures above are the sum of the Department of Employment's estimates for the following industries, classified according to the 1980 Standard Industrial Classification: iron and steel industry (group 221); ferrous metal foundries (activity heading 3111); forging, pressing and stamping (group 312); and industrial plant and steelwork (group 320). There are, in addition, various industries associated with the manufacture and processing of steel for which separate estimates for the dates specified are not available.

Government policy towards the steel industry, as for industry as a whole, is to set a framework for free and fair competition and the encouragement of enterprise.

Industry Council

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the matters expected to be discussed at the next meeting of the European Community Industry Council on 26 November.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 21 November 1990]:* The Industry Council on 26 November, which Lord Hesketh will attend on behalf of the United Kingdom, is expected to discuss a Commission communication to the Council on industrial policy, a draft directive on aid for the Community shipbuilding industry, and a Commission proposal to extend the patent term for pharmaceuticals.

The Commission are also expected to make statements on the industrial impact of the Uruguay round, on the European semi-conductor industry, on the arts and crafts industry, on small and medium sized enterprises and on the future of the ECSC treaty.

Company Accounts (Environmental Information)

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what studies his Department has commissioned, or intends to commission, on what proportion of companies in the United Kingdom carry out an environmental audit or publish environmental information in their annual accounts; and if he intends to publish the results of any studies.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 22 November 1990]:* The Government encourage companies to use the management technique of environmental audit as part of comprehensive action to assess and improve their environmental performance. The Government also welcome the growth in the number of companies voluntarily publishing more information about their environmental performance. I am aware of a number of reports by commercial and other organisations which include information about environmental auditing and reporting by business. However, my Department has not commissioned—nor are there any plans to commission—a systematic study of the number of companies in the United Kingdom which are using environmental audits or publishing environmental information, for example in their annual report and accounts.

Department Inspectors (Unpublished Reports)

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether any unpublished reports of his Department's inspectors criticise any of the auditors, solicitors, bankers, brokers underwriters or other advisers involved in the matters on which the reports have been produced.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 22 November 1990]:* I cannot disclose details of unpublished reports.

WALES

"How Green was my Valley"

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if his Department's library will obtain a copy of "How Green was my Valley", published by the Council for the Protection of Rural Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The Department's library already holds a copy of this report.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the current poll tax payment rates in each local authority area in Wales, as percentage figures; and if he will indicate the numbers that have only paid one poll tax instalment in each instance.

Mr. Grist: Information relating to numbers of community charge payers making payments is not available centrally.

Green Belts and National Parks

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he has any plans to designate green belt areas in Wales.

Mr. Grist: Green belts are established through development plans. As responsibility for preparing such plans rests with local planning authorities so too does the initiation of Green Belts. My right hon. Friend has recently invited the Assembly of Welsh Counties, in collaboration with other bodies, to assess the potential role which green belts might play in the proper planning of Wales and to report to him. To launch this exercise my right hon. Friend is convening a conference to be held in January 1991.

Higher Education

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the total number of students at each public sector higher education college in Wales during 1989-90; and how many of these students were normally resident in Wales, in total numbers and as a percentage of the main student body.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The information for the academic year 1989-90 is shown in the following table:

	Students on higher education courses in Wales	*Resident Welsh students[1] on higher education courses*	*Resident Welsh students as a percentage of higher education students*
The Polytechnic of Wales	6,219	3,388	54
South Glamorgan Institute of Higher Education	3,618	2,533	70
Gwent College of Higher Education	3,618	2,863	79
North East Wales Institute of Higher Education	2,962	1,875	63
West Glamorgan Institute of Higher Education	2,825	2,277	81
Trinity College	691	487	70
Normal College of Higher Education	643	534	83
Carmarthen College of Technology and Art	392	336	86
Welsh College of Music and Drama	293	98	33
Bridgend College of Technology	231	230	100
Gwynedd Technical College	181	181	100
Llandrillo Technical College	143	122	85
Newport College of Further Education	110	102	93
Pontypridd Technical College	107	106	99
Ebbw Vale College of Further Education	92	92	100
Welsh Agricultural College	78	43	55
Merthyr Tydfil Technical College	63	63	100
Neath College	52	52	100
Pembrokeshire College of Further Education	41	41	100
Crosskeys Tertiary College	32	32	
Aberdare College of Further Education	31	31	
Afan College	14	14	
Ystrad Mynach College of Further Education	10	10	
Ceredigion College of Further Education	9	9	
Total Wales	22,455	15,519	

[1] Students whose home (grant-awarding) local authorit Wales.

Rail Services

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of Sta Wales what consultations he has had with Britis concerning the need to upgrade rail services betwe Newport and Shrewsbury, *(b)* Shrewsbury and Wre *(c)* Wrexham and Bidston and *(d)* Chester and Wre and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I consult regularly with the cha of British Rail on a wide range of rail issues. Howev upgrading of services is a matter for determinat British Rail.

Education Authorities (Land Sales)

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of St Wales if he will list the property and land sold by the local education authorities of Wales, giving the n realised at each transaction for each year since 19

Sir Wyn Roberts: The information requested is n centrally.

Green Belts and National Parks

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of St Wales if he will make a statement concerning his towards the retention of existing green belts and n parks in Wales.

Mr. Grist: In December 1989 the Coun Commission announced a major review of the me which national parks' purposes are pursued. The which was endorsed by my right hon. Friend and m hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environm expected to make recommendations on the way f for the parks into the next century. There are no belts in Wales.

Primary Schools

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for what guidelines are issued by his Department t education authorities in Wales concerning the op size of any new primary schools, and as to whethe should, in any circumstances, have a capacity in ex 500 pupils.

Sir Wyn Roberts: None.

Abattoirs

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the abattoirs in Wales currently available for the slaughter of lambs for export to mainland Europe; if he has any proposals to provide part or full funding for new abattoirs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: The following abattoirs in Wales are currently available for the slaughter of lambs for export to mainland Europe: Fairfield Meat Co, Maelor Abattoir, Marchwiel, Wrexham, Clwyd; Oriel Jones and Son Ltd, Teifi Park Abattoir, Llanybydder, Dyfed; and United Meat Packers (Wales) Ltd, Gaerwen Industrial Estate, Anglesey, Gwynedd.

Schemes for new abattoirs may be assisted by way of regional enterprise grants (if they are located in development areas and employ fewer than 25 people), or they could qualify for regional selective assistance (essentially if they create or safeguard employment and offer a distinct regional or national benefit). However, there are EC restrictions on the granting of support towards projects which increase United Kingdom slaughter capacity unless compensating reductions in capacity can be demonstrated.

Agriculture

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any proposals to widen the role of the Development Board for Rural Wales to include strategic planning and support for the agriculture industry in north and mid Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: I have no such proposals. These responsibilities are a matter for my agriculture department.

Kidney Patients

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what information he has about the number of renal patients who satisfy the criteria of the Renal Association of Great Britain, and approved by the Department of Health, for treatment with Erythropoietin; and what percentage is receiving it;

(2) how much additional money he has made available to health authorities for the newly approved drug Erythropoietin to be prescribed; and what estimate he has made of the number of renal patients who will be treated as a result.

Mr. Grist: Information on the number of renal patients who satisfy the criteria for treatment with Erythropoietin is not held centrally, nor is information on the number of patients receiving it. Recurrent funding of £390,000 per annum has been made available to health authorities in Wales which manage the regional main renal units to support the provision of Erythropoietin. However, the prescription of Erythropoietin is a matter of clinical judgment and I am unable to estimate the number of patients who will be treated.

Educational Psychologists

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what considerations led him to discontinue national priority status for the training of educational psychologists in the 1991-92 grants for educational support and training programme.

Sir Wyn Roberts: All Welsh LEAs were invited in a letter from the Department dated 18 October 1990 to bid for the initial training of educational psychologists in 1991-92. Several bids have been received which are being considered.

Asthma

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will commission research on the health effects of fine dust particulates from industrial and extracting industries and as to any relationship between the presence of certain types of dust in the atmosphere and the incidence of asthma.

Mr. Grist: Health and safety matters are the responsibility of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Employment.

Planning Appeals

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish the totals of planning appeals heard by his inspectors in each of the past eight years, and the totals of their decisions to approve or reject.

Mr. Grist: The information is set out in the table:

	Heard	*Approved*	*Rejected*
1982	678	183	495
1983	620	231	389
1984	610	222	388
1985	581	244	337
1986	811	335	476
1987	747	263	484
1988	1,007	321	686
1989	1,177	367	810

NHS Trusts

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales on what date he received an expression of interest from Pembrokeshire health authority in reconstituting the whole authority as a national health service unit.

Mr. Grist: An initial submission was received on 8 October. Further information was submitted on 16 November.

Mental Handicap

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what arrangements he proposes for the full review of the mental handicap strategy in 1991-92 proposed in the Welsh chapter of the White Paper, "Caring for People—Community Care in the Next Decade and Beyond."

Mr. David Hunt: The Welsh Office has today issued a letter setting out the arrangements for the review and invited comments on key issues which are set out in a detailed paper. Copies of these documents have been

placed in the Library. The review will enable me to take decisions about the next steps in ensuring the maintenance and development of quality services for people in Wales with mental handicaps before the end of the strategy's initially programmed 10 years in March 1993.

ENERGY

Coal Industry

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will give an estimate of the number of people employed in the United Kingdom coal industry in each year since 1979; and if he will make a statement concerning Government policy towards that industry.

Mr. Baldry: British Coal is by far the largest single employer in the United Kingdom coal industry, and the numbers employed by the Corporation since 1979 are set out in the annual report which is available in the Library of the House.

Decisions on British Coal manpower levels are a commercial matter for the corporation.

Multiple Share Applications

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy, pursuant to his answer of 21 November, what is his estimate of the likely completion date of the investigations into multiple share applications for British Gas.

Mr. Wakeham: Investigations into multiple share applications for British Gas shares are a matter for the police.

Coal Supplies

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he expects next to discuss with the chairman of National Power an increase in the coal price to be paid to members of the South Wales Small Mines Association by National Power.

Mr. Baldry: My discussions with the chairman of National Power are confidential.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy on how many occasions he has requested the competition directorate of the European Commission to expedite its adjudication of the discrimination complaint regarding coal supplies to the electricity industry made by the South Wales Small Mines Association.

Mr. Baldry: The handling of the complaint made by the South Wales Small Mines Association is a matter for the Commission.

PowerGen

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what severance payment is to be paid to Robert Malpas on his resignation as chairman of PowerGen; and whether he was consulted on the sums involved.

Mr. Wakeham: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) on 23 November at column *251*.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the salary of the new chairman of PowerGen; how many days a week Sir Graham Day will be PowerGen; and what terms have been agreed salary after the privatisation of PowerGen.

Mr. Wakeham: Sir Graham Day's salary of PowerGen is £110,000 per year.

Sir Graham will be devoting around two d PowerGen over the year as a whole. Greate time in the period up to flotation are ex balanced by a reduced involvement later on.

No terms have been agreed for fixing his sa privatisation of PowerGen.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of Stat what was the salary of the former chairman o how many days a week Robert Malpas PowerGen; and what terms had been agreed salary after the privatisation of PowerGen.

Mr. Wakeham: Mr. Malpas's salary was year. He worked three days per week at Po terms had been agreed for fixing his sala privatisation of PowerGen.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of Stat (1) when he was consulted on the appointme chairman of PowerGen;

(2) what information he has on the rea resignation of the chairman of PowerGen.

Mr. Wakeham: I refer the hon. Member t that I gave him on 22 November at column

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of Sta what representations he has received in recen PowerGen regarding a management-led empl

Mr. Baldry: None.

Energy Conservation (Schools)

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of Sta what advice on energy conservation he education authorities and school governo local financial management.

Mr. Baldry: I am writing shortly to all he the United Kingdom with advice on how t energy costs in schools. The Department of E Science has already contributed to a numbe for headteachers on energy efficiency in scho are being drawn up for further seminars ne

THORP Plant

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of Sta what will be *(a)* the additional cost or *(b)* domestic and (ii) commercial users of electri THORP is commissioned in 1992; and what of its effect on the national economy.

Mr. Baldry: The commissioning of the T will have no effect on the price of electrici consumers. The facility will support work fo people and British Nuclear Fuels plc THORP's profitability by winning some £6, orders for its first 10 years of operation, in £4,000 million from overseas customers.

Electricity Privatisation

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what will be the cost of the incentive electricity vouchers and alternative bonus shares issued to purchasers of shares in the electricity distribution companies.

Mr. Baldry: The cost will depend on the number of people applying for shares and on the number who hold on to their shares.

Low-energy Light Bulbs

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what steps he has taken to encourage Government Departments and other public authorities to install low-energy light bulbs in their buildings.

Mr. Baldry: As part of the Government's initiative to improve energy efficiency on the Government estate my energy efficiency office gives advice, and encourages Departments to take all cost-effective energy efficiency measures available. In my Department's Palace street building low-energy light bulbs have been fitted, and other Departments have taken similar measures.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Disabled Students

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many students confined to a wheelchair are currently enrolled in primary and secondary schools; and what information he has on the number unable to be offered places due to lack of funds or facilities.

Mr. Alan Howarth: This information is not collected centrally. It is for local education authorities to determine their own policies to accomplish the integration of pupils with physical disabilities in ordinary schools.

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many deaf-blind students are currently enrolled in primary and secondary schools; what provisions have been made for them; and what plans for improvement are to be implemented in the near future.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Precise identification of deaf-blind students is difficult because the degrees of deafness and blindness vary and may be combined with learning difficulties and physical disabilities. These make accurate diagnosis difficult. The latest information available to the Department is that some 800 deaf-blind pupils are currently enrolled in all maintained, including special, schools. Responsibility for educational provision for deaf-blind students rests with local education authorities.

In 1989 the Department issued a policy statement on the educational needs of these children, which is intended to provide a framework within which local education authorities and bodies responsible for non-maintained schools will be able to plan services and make suitable provision for deaf-blind students. We have undertaken a consultation exercise with local education authorities to follow up the policy statement, and are proposing a joint seminar with SENSE early in 1991 to disseminate the results of that exercise.

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what are the estimated figures of primary or secondary age blind-deaf students on waiting lists to be admitted to special schools and how long is the average wait for admittance.

Mr. Alan Howarth: This information is not collected centrally.

Educational Psychologists

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what considerations led him to maintain national priority status for the training of educational psychologists in the 1991-92 grants for educational support and training programme.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Local education authorities employ educational psychologists to undertake a range of important functions including the fulfilment of their statutory obligations, under the Education Act 1981, relating to the assessment of, and provision of education for, children with special educational needs. The specific funding for local education authorities under the grants for educational support and training programme for the training of educational psychologists is designed to encourage and assist the maintenance of a national stock of suitably qualified people.

Student Loans

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what are the latest estimates of current expenditure on the student loans scheme, disaggregated into (i) administrative costs, (ii) advances to students and (iii) expenditure on access funds; what were the original public expenditure forecasts for these items; and what are the reasons for the variations.

Mr. Alan Howarth: There has been no change in the approved Estimates provision for 1990-91 of a total of £147·6 million for student loans. This provision is for the United Kingdom and comprises £130·6 million for loans to students and £17·0 million for the establishment and administration of the student loans scheme. Total United Kingdom provision for access funds is £25·5 million. This provision includes an additional £10 million approved by Parliament in March 1990, to give higher education institutions greater scope for extending discretionary assistance to students.

Council of Europe

Mrs. Rosie Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many nations within the Council of Europe were represented by Ministers at the third conference of Ministers responsible for youth, in Lisbon on 19 to 22 September; which Ministers represented the United Kingdom; and what action the Government intends to take to implement the decisions of the conference.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Eighteen member states of the Council of Europe were represented by Ministers at the Lisbon conference on youth mobility. The United Kingdom, which was represented by officials, abstained from voting on the conference resolutions. The United Kingdom Government recognise the potential benefits of freedom of movement in Europe, and will explore how best to mitigate or overcome specific barriers to youth

mobility within existing legal provisions. We do not consider however that formal international legal instruments provide the best means to achieve this. I have placed in the Library a copy of the conference's final text which includes a declaration by the United Kingdom.

Teachers' Salaries

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what would be the additional cost to central Government expenditure if the total cost of the teachers' salaries were borne exclusively by central Government.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Estimated spending by LEAs in England on teachers in 1990-91 is some £8 billion. The net additional cost to central Government of transferring the responsibility for that spending would depend on the extent to which there was a reduction in the grant paid to local authorities.

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what guidelines he has issued to education authorities and school governors operating local financial management regarding the optimum use of energy within their school buildings; and whether he has any proposals to update them.

Mr. Fallon: The Department has co-operated with the Department of Energy in the preparation of guidance on the optimum use of energy within school buildings. A booklet in reducing energy costs in schools was produced in September. Further guidance on energy savings measures in schools and education authorities is in preparation.

PRIME MINISTER

Emperor of Japan (Coronation)

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Prime Minister what expenditure from public funds was incurred in connection with Her Majesty's Government's representation at the coronation of the Emperor of Japan; from what departmental budgets it was funded; and if she will provide a breakdown of the expenditure.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 21 November 1990]:* Her Majesty's Government were represented at the coronation of the Emperor of Japan by Her Majesty's Ambassador in Tokyo. The costs involved were minimal.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Humanitarian Aid

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the criteria used to assess whether an award of humanitarian aid is made to a foreign country.

Mrs. Chalker: Humanitarian aid is provided, within available resources, on a case-by-case basis according to need.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Asylum

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of Home Department how many immigratio currently engaged in the processing of ap political asylum in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: None. Such app processed in the asylum and special cases c immigration and nationality department.

Prisons (Creches)

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State Department what is the number of creche or at prisons in England and Wales which ca people visiting inmates; if he will list the pri such facilities are funded.

Mrs. Rumbold: According to the la information, 66 prison service establishmen area for use by the children of people vis either in the visits room or in the visitors' re These establishments are listed in the table. a supervised creche is provided. Play areas a usually financed by the establishment's purpose fund, with support in some cases fi organisations. We particularly welcome th made by the Butler Trust to the setting up a creche facilities.

HM prison service establishments with a pl children of visitors.

Acklington
Albany
Aldington
Ashwell
Askham Grange
Birmingham
Blantyre House
Blundeston
Bristol
Brockhill
Bullwood Hall
Camp Hill
Cardiff
Castington
Coldingley
Cookham Wood
Deerbolt
Durham
Erelstoke
Featherstone
Ford
Frankland
Full Sutton
Garth
Gloucester
Grendon
Hindley
Hull
Kingston
Lancaster
Leicester
Lewes
Leyhill
Lindholme
Littlehey
Long Lartin
Maidstone
Manchester
Morton Hall
The Mount
New Hall

North Sea Camp
Norwich
Nottingham
Onley
Oxford
Parkhurst
Portland
Preston
Rudgate
Send
Shepton Mallet
Spring Hill
Stafford
Stocken
Swaleside
Swansea
Swinfen Hall
Thorn Cross
Thorp Arch
Usk
The Verne
Wakefield
Wayland
Winchester
Wymott

Privacy

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he proposes to bring forward legislation to protect the individual against intrusion by journalists as recommended by the report of the Committee on privacy and related matters.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: As the hon. Gentleman will recall, on 21 June at columns 1123-24, my right hon. and learned Friend announced the Government's acceptance in principle of the proposals for new criminal offences which the Calcutt committee had put forward. We have been examining these proposals and the various representations, mainly from press interests, which we have received about them. We will inform the House of the Government's considered response to these proposals as soon as that consideration is completed.

Fire Stations

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the total number of fire stations in each fire brigade area in the United Kingdom; and on average, how many people are served by each fire station according to each fire brigade area.

Mr. John Patten: The statistics for England and Wales, based on the annual returns by fire authorities of the fire brigade establishment scheme in force in their areas on 1 January 1990, are as follows:

Fire brigade	*Fire stations*	*Population*	*Average population served*
Avon	23	956,200	41,573
Bedfordshire	14	530,700	37,907
Berkshire	19	752,900	39,626
Buckinghamshire	25	640,000	25,600
Cambridgeshire	28	652,740	23,312
Cheshire	24	951,900	39,662
Cleveland	15	553,400	36,893
Clwyd	18	407,000	22,611
Cornwall	32	460,000	14,375
Cumbria	38	487,000	12,815
Derbyshire	31	918,720	29,636
Devon	58	1,010,000	17,413
Dorset	26	655,700	25,219
Durham	18	586,700	32,594
Dyfed	25	348,400	13,936
East Sussex	24	712,800	29,700
Essex	51	1,521,800	29,839
Gloucestershire	20	527,500	26,375
Gwent	20	445,500	22,275
Gwynedd	26	238,000	9,153
Hampshire	55	1,615,000	29,363
Hereford and Worcester	26	650,773	25,030
Hertfordshire	32	996,198	31,131
Humberside	31	846,500	27,306
Isles of Scilly	5	2,000	400
Isle of Wight	10	132,000	13,200
Kent	65	1,520,400	23,390
Lancashire	40	1,386,300	34,658
Leicestershire	19	885,500	46,605
Lincolnshire	37	590,000	15,946
London	114	6,764,074	59,334
Greater Manchester	41	2,585,200	63,053
Merseyside	28	1,448,139	51,719
Mid Glamorgan	24	534,700	22,279
Norfolk	40	752,100	18,803
Northamptonshire	22	575,000	26,136
Northumberland	19	304,850	16,044
North Yorkshire	36	713,100	19,808
Nottinghamshire	26	1,007,700	38,758
Oxfordshire	24	600,400	25,017
Powys	18	112,500	6,250
Shropshire	23	400,800	17,426
Somerset	24	457,700	19,071
South Glamorgan	8	403,400	50,425
South Yorkshire	27	1,315,000	48,704
Staffordshire	30	1,039,900	34,663
Suffolk	35	643,900	18,397
Surrey	24	999,752	41,656
Tyne and Wear	19	1,135,900	59,784
Warwickshire	20	484,200	24,210
West Glamorgan	12	362,800	30,233
West Midlands	41	2,617,242	63,835
West Sussex	28	708,000	28,286
West Yorkshire	52	2,056,600	39,550
Wiltshire	24	564,000	23,500

Population is just one factor among many—fully explained in fire service circular No. 4/1985, copies of which are in the Library—used in categorising risk and thus determining the number, location and staffing of fire stations.

Open Prisons

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will publish a table showing the numbers of prisoners transferred to open prisons in the last year, their categorisation, the number transferred to

open prisons in the first week of their sentence and the period of their sentences which the remainder served prior to their transfer to the open prison;

(2) what are the current arrangements for deciding whether a prisoner is transferred to an open prison; and whether he has any plans to change those arrangements.

Mrs. Rumbold: A judgment is made in each case, based on information about the prisoner including any previous convictions for violent or sex offences, as to whether he or she can reasonably be trusted in open conditions. In some cases sufficient relevant information takes time to acquire. In general, the prison service seeks to transfer suitable prisoners to open conditions as soon as possible after sentence. There are no plans to alter these arrangements.

Details of the number of prisoners transferred to open prisons, including those who are transferred in the first week of their sentences, are not collected centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Deportation

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many women currently serving prison sentences he currently plans to deport upon completion of their sentence; what crimes they have committed; and what are their countries of origin.

Mrs. Rumbold: The information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Remand Prisoners

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many remand prisoners were held in police cells on 1 November; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: On 1 November, a total of 1,044 prisoners, the majority of whom were remand prisoners, were held in police cells. It is not possible to identify separately a precise total for the number of remand prisoners because at the time in question this information was not available centrally for all police areas.

Seizure for Debt Rules

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to amend the Magistrates' Courts Rules 1981 in order to bring the categories of goods exempt from seizure for debts into line with the provisions of the courts and Legal Services Act 1990; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: We are actively considering, and will be consulting the Justices Clerks Society and others about amendments to the 1981 rules which would have this effect.

Broadcasting

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made of the capacity of the Independent Broadcasting Authority to provide adequate supervision and influence in the situation which has developed in regard to the future of British Satellite Broadcasting and of the D-MAC television technology.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Independent Broadcasting Authority has the powers conferred on it by Parliament in broadcasting legislation. Having considered the merger between British Satellite Broadcasting and Sky Television plc, it has announced its decision to terminate the contract it held with British Satellite Broadcasting. The new company, British Sky Broadcasting, will require a non-domestic satellite service licence under the Broadcasting Act 1990, and the Independent Television Commission has full powers to draw up and award such a licence and enforce its conditions.

The Government do not seek to impose new technology where it is not commercially viable. EC directive 86/529 requires all DBS services to be broadcast using the MAC transmission standard. The directive thus governed British Satellite Broadcasting but not Sky transmissions, and will apply to any future user of the DBS channels. It will be reviewed in 1991 and the Government are considering their attitude to a replacement directive in the light of recent events.

Animal Experiments

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action his Department's inspectors have taken to ensure that the provisions of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 are observed in the conduct of experiments on animals at the National Institute for Medical Research laboratories, Mill Hill, London; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: All establishments in Great Britain designated under the Act, including the National Institute for Medical Research at Mill Hill, are subject to visits, mainly without notice, by the animals (scientific procedures) inspectorate to ensure that the controls of the Act and the terms and conditions of licences issued under it are being observed.

Prisoners (Compassionate Leave)

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department why Delroy Showers was not allowed to attend his mother's funeral from prison, following representations from the hon. Member for Liverpool, Riverside.

Mrs. Rumbold: Mr. Showers' request to attend the funeral of his mother was considered in the light of all the circumstances but was not allowed for security reasons.

"Charity and the National Health"

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his policy on those recommendations which relate to his responsibilities contained in the report, "Charity and the National Health" (Directory of Social Change research paper No. 1), a copy of which has been sent to him; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: We have not received a copy of the report, "Charities and the National Health," which was sent to the Department of Health. We will gladly consider any points which may be relevant to the Home Office if my hon. Friend cares to draw them to my attention.

HEALTH

Asthma and Eczema

Sir Richard Body: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the total annual cost of treatment for asthma and eczema, respectively *(a)* through the family practitioner service and *(b)* through the hospital service.

Mr. Dorrell: The estimated annual cost of treating asthma is £44 million through hospital in-patient treatment and £200 million through the family health services. It is not possible to estimate the hospital out-patient cost of asthma from information collected centrally. Eczema covers a range of conditions not separately identified in the information collected, and therefore information on costing is not available.

Sir Richard Body: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the total number of national health service patients being treated for asthma and eczema, respectively; and what is the number of new cases in each category every year.

Mr. Dorrell: This information is not held centrally.

South London Hospital for Women

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans there are for the future use of the South London hospital for women; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: I understand that the future use of the hospital is still being considered; the hon. Member may like to contact Sir Peter Baldwin, the chairman of South East Thames regional health authority for further information.

Salmonella Enteritidis

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish a table showing for each county of England and Wales the number of outbreaks of salmonella enteritidis PT4 in 1990 to date.

Mr. Dorrell: Provisional figures for the first nine months of 1990 (weeks one to 39) show tht 315 outbreaks (including two or more people) of infection with salmonella enteritidis PT4 were reported to the PHLS communicable disease surveillance centre from England and Wales.

The distribution of these outbreaks by regional health authority is as follows:

	Number
Northern	4
Yorkshire	62
Trent	36
East Anglia	13
North West Thames	15
North East Thames	7
South East Thames	18
South West Thames	18
Wessex	23
Oxford	10
South Western	43
West Midlands	22
Mersey	9
North Western	21
Wales	14
Total	315

Child Care

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if his Department's library will obtain a copy of "Caring for Children; the 1990 Report," produced by the family policy studies centre.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Yes. A copy of the report was ordered by the Department's library service on 13 November 1990.

Day Nurseries

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps are being taken by his Department to increase the availability of day nursery places.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The number of places in day nurseries in England increased by nearly 14 per cent. in the year to 31 March 1989 to over 75,000.

The tax concession for employer-managed child care facilities in the 1990 Budget will encourage further development. The new review duty introduced in the Children Act 1989 (to be implemented in October 1991) will require local authorities regularly to look at local services used by young children and publish reports. This will ensure more coherent use and development of services.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which outside agency is undertaking the analysis of national health service trust applications; and at what cost.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The financial assessment of national health service trust applicants has been undertaken by Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte management consultants. The total budget for this exercise is £536,000.

Custard

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what European regulations exist or are proposed concerning the production and use of custard; what representations he has received; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: No European regulations exist concerning the production and use of custard and we are not aware that any are proposed. Representations have been received concerning the implications of the Food Hygiene (Amendment) Regulations 1990 for custards and custard tarts which we are currently considering.

National Insurance

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his estimate of the net additional cost to the national health service of the changes to employers' national insurance contributions and reimbursement announced in the autumn statement.

Mr. Dorrell: No central estimate has been made of the effect on the NHS of the changes in national insurance rates.

Kidney Patients

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has about the number of renal patients who satisfy the criteria of the Renal Association

of Great Britain, and approved by his Department for treatment with Erythropoietin; and what percentage are receiving it.

Mr. Dorrell: This information is not collected centrally.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much additional money he has made available to health authorities for the newly approved drug Erythropoietin to be prescribed and what estimate he has made of the number of renal patients who will be treated as a result.

Mr. Dorrell: Health authorities are expected to finance Erythropoietin from their main allocations. Like other new treatments, it is being introduced progressively across the health service and spending throughout the NHS is, of course, increased to cover such new treatments, and services. It is for each region to assess their patients' requirements for the drug and make appropriate plans to ensure that need is met.

Graham Gaskin Case

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) on what date the judgment of the Government of the European court was given in the Graham Gaskin case;

(2) if he will list what steps the Government have taken to implement the European court ruling of the Graham Gaskin case, listing dates and times of meetings, and those present;

(3) what are the reasons for the length of time taken in completing consideration of the implementation of the ruling given in the European court on the Graham Gaskin case;

(4) if he will place in the Library all the documents relating to the Graham Gaskin case held by his Department;

(5) how many members of his Department's staff are engaged in the study to examine the implications of the Graham Gaskin case; when the study was opened; what the terms of reference of the study are; and when the study will be completed.

Mr. Dorrell: The decision of the European Court of Human Rights in the Graham Gaskin case was given on 7 July 1989. The court held, by a majority vote, that there had been a violation of article 8 of the convention for the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the handling of Mr. Gaskin's request for access to case records relating to the period he spent in care as a child, and that the United Kingdom should pay damages to Mr. Gaskin. Payment was made to Mr. Gaskin in 1989.

As I indicated in my reply to the hon. Member on 30 October at column *446* the implications of the decision in respect of policy on access to personal records are being studied. Progress is being made and I will write to the hon. Member once decisions have been taken. Copies of the judgment of the European Court in Mr. Gaskin's case are held in the Library.

Terminal Care

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received about the £8 million made available in England in 1990-91 for hospices and terminal care; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: A number of letters concerning the detailed implementation of this year's arrangements have been received. We are seeki information from health authorities and will be discussi with them any problems that arise.

Adoption

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for Heal which countries' adoption orders are recognised by t United Kingdom.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Adoption orders made und the law of any country specified in the Adopti (Designation of Overseas Adoptions) Order 1973 a recognised as valid under United Kingdom statutory la A copy of the order is available in the Library.

Adoption orders made in countries which have ratifi the Hague convention on jurisdiction, applicable law a recognition of decrees are also recognised. Like the Unit Kingdom, Austria and Switzerland have ratified t convention.

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for Heal what steps he is taking to ensure that adoption orde made in Romania will be recognised in the Unit Kingdom.

Mrs. Virgina Bottomley: Adoption orders made Romania are not recognised as valid under Unit Kingdom statutory law. People who adopt a Romani child are required, as part of the entry clearan procedures, to undertake to apply to adopt the child in t United Kingdom. The recognition of foreign adopti orders is being considered in the current adoption la review.

Census Information

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State f Health whether information gathered during the co pletion of the census will remain private and confident from community charge registration officers.

Mr. Dorrell: Yes. It would be an offence under secti 8 of the Census Act 1920 for anyone employed on t census to pass personal information from the complet census returns to community charge registration office or anyone else outside the census offices, and any brea of confidence in this respect would also be treated as serious disciplinary offence.

"Charity and the National Health"

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for Heal what is his policy on those recommendations which rela to his responsibilities contained in the report, "Charity a the National Health" (Directory of Social Chan Research Paper No. 1) a copy of which has been sent him; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: The management and use of NHS tr funds is a matter for the appointed trustees in accordan with general trust and charity law. Trustees should ha regard to the terms of individual trusts in deciding h funds are spent.

The Government encourage fund raising and ask heal authorities to consult widely with voluntary groups planning their fund-raising activities.

Nurse-bed Ratios

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the number of nurses employed by the national health service in 1960 , 1970, 1980 and 1990, or the latest date available and the number of occupied national health service hospital beds for each date, showing the nurse to occupied bed ratio in each case.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 12 November 1990]:* The available information is given in the table. Figures for the earlier years cannot be provided on a comparable basis. There is no direct comparison between the manpower and the occupied bed information. The manpower figures relate to the total numbers of nursing and midwifery staff employed in the NHS hospital and community services. However, occupied beds relate to the hospital service only and are not a particularly meaningful measurement of service provision.

NHS nursing and midwifery staff and average number of beds occupied daily—England
Number and wholetime equivalents[1]

Year	Nursing and midwifery at September[2]	Average number of beds occupied daily
1980	370,100	289,500
1986	402,700	254,600
1989	405,300	[3]—

Source: Department of Health (SM13) Annual Census of NHS Non-Medical Manpower and SH3 Returns.

[1]All figures are independently rounded to the nearest hundred (100).

[2]Includes all qualified nurses and midwives, learners and unqualified nursing staff and agency staff.

[3]Information not available centrally beyond 1986.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Kilroot Power Station

Mr. A. Cecil Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what has been the capital outlay for equipment which is already obsolete for phase 2 of Kilroot power station.

Dr. Mawhinney: None of the equipment for Kilroot phase 2 has been classed as obsolete.

Mr. A. Cecil Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the total outlay expended to date on equipment already purchased for phase 2 of Kilroot power station.

Dr. Mawhinney: Northern Ireland Electricity estimates this to be £65 million.

Mr. A. Cecil Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the approximate date when the decision will be reached regarding the commencement of phase 2 of Kilroot power station.

Dr. Mawhinney: Decisions on Kilroot 2 will be taken as soon as possible. A number of options which affect the timing are under consideration at present, in particular the possibility of developing an electricity interconnector with Scotland and the possibility of piping natural gas to Northern Ireland for electricity generation. Both issues are being progressed as a matter of urgency.

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he last met British Coal representatives to discuss Kilroot 2 power station; and if he will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: I last met British Coal representatives on 14 November 1990. The discussion covered a number of topics including Kilroot 2.

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what assessment he has made of the effect Kilroot 2 power station will have on transport jobs in Northern Ireland if it is not coal fired; and if he will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: Over the past year I have had representations on this issue from Northern Ireland Electricity, the trade unions, Members of Parliament, Carrickfergus borough council and British Coal.

EMPLOYMENT

Employment Training

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the impending closure of employment training schemes initiated by the Allen Graham Trust for disabled and other disadvantaged young people; and what action he is prepared to take to save these schemes.

Mr. Jackson *[holding answer 23 November 1990]:* The financial difficulties of the Allen Graham Trust were first brought to my attention early last week. Because of the valuable work done over a period of years by the trust, I asked my officials to meet immediately with representatives of the trust to explore what might be done to assist them. During this meeting, it was established that the trust had become insolvent. In those circumstances, it would be wrong to put at risk further substantial sums of taxpayers' money. The main concern now is to ensure that everything possible is done to provide alternative opportunities for trainees and others as quickly as possible and with the minimum amount of disruption for the people concerned.

DEFENCE

Community Charge

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many service personnel have been prosecuted to date for non-payment of the community charge.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Non-payment of the community charge is a civil rather than a criminal matter, so the question of prosecutions as such does not arise. I am aware of about 190 court appearances by Service personnel in connection with non-payment of the community charge.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many times bailiffs employed by local authorities have visited service accommodation in connection with non-payment of the community charge.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Twice, so far as I am aware.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy regarding the admission of bailiffs employed by local authorities on to Ministry of Defence property.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Bailiffs employed by local authorities may be admitted to Ministry of Defence property, but they must be accompanied at all times by Service personnel when within unit boundaries.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many attachment of possessions orders have been served on service personnel to date due to non-payment of community charges.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Liability orders for non payment of the community charge give local authorities a number of recovery options, including distraint. I am not aware that this latter option has been used against any Service personnel.

Attachment of Earnings

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) whether he will place in the Library copies of directives or documents distributed to regimental paymasters relating to the exemption of service personnel from attachment of earnings orders;

(2) if he will place a copy of Ministry of Defence directive D/PSA/11/1/11 PS4 (A) in the Library.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: A copy of the directive sent to commands regarding the enforcement of liability orders and the exemption of service personnel from attachment of earnings orders is being placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what advice has been given to service personnel regarding their liability to attachment of earnings orders served on them by local authorities in respect of community charges.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Personnel have been advised of the possible consequences of non-payment, including deductions at source from pay to recover arrears.

Accommodation Charges

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will state the percentage of each of the accommodation charges listed for quarters outside Scotland on page 29 of the 19 report of the review body on armed forces pay (Cm 936) that was paid in lieu of rates.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The information is as follows:

Domestic rates elements as a percentage of accommodation charges introduced with effect from 1 April 1989[1]

Percentages

Type of quarter	*Standard of quarter* Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4
Married quarters (except in Scotland)				
Officers				
I	31·3	31·3	31·3	31·3
II	31·3	31·3	31·3	31·3
III	31·8	31·9	31·8	31·8
IV	30·7	30·7	30·7	30·7
V	31·6	31·7	31·6	31·6
Other ranks				
D	30·2	30·2	30·3	30·3
C	30·0	30·0	30·0	30·0
B	28·3	28·3	28·3	28·3
A	23·4	23·4	23·5	23·4
Single quarters (except in Scotland)				
Rank				
Major and above	27·1	27·1	27·4	27·0
Captain and below	29·3	29·4	29·3	28·7
Warrant Officer and senior NCO	27·3	27·3	27·5	
Corporal and below	25·4	25·5	25·8	
Young servicemen	24·7	24·9	25·2	

[1]Payable to 31 March 1990.

Gulf Forces

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Def how many free airmail letters can be sent and received week by service personnel stationed in the Gulf regio

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There is no restriction on number of forces free airletters that can be sent received per week by service personnel stationed in Gulf region.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Def what is the average length of time taken for an air letter to reach service personnel in the Gulf region f *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* Germany.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: All letters addressed to ser personnel in the Gulf region are transported by air present, letters posted in the United Kingdom ar within about five days and those from Germany wi about four days.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Def what is the latest posting date for parcels and letters t sent to service personnel in the Gulf region in time Christmas.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The latest recommended pos dates for parcels and letters to be sent to service perso in the Gulf region in time for Christmas are:

1 December
All classes of surface mail including economy se parcels.

13 December
Airmail 2nd class letters, cards, packets and stan service (airmail) parcels.

14 December
Airmail 1st class letters, cards and forces free airlet

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Def what arrangements he will make to ensure that Christ parcels can be sent out to those serving in the Gulf in for Christmas free of charge.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Forces free airletters delivered to the Gulf region free of charge. Parcels ca sent at forces concessionary rates, which are roughl line with United Kingdom inland postage rates.

Nuclear Arms Testing

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defen he will list in the *Official Report* all unclassified stu undertaken by the Atomic Weapons Establishment an predecessor since 1979 on *(a)* the United States nuc test site at Nevada and *(b)* the Soviet nuclear test sit Semipalatinsk and Novaya Zemla; and how m classified studies have been undertaken at the Ato Weapons Research Establishment or the Atomic Weap Establishment on these test sites over the same perio

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The unclassified seismolo studies undertaken by the Atomic Weapons Establishm

and its predecessor since 1979 on the United States nuclear test site at Nevada and the Soviet sites at Semipalatinsk and Novya Zemlya are as follows:

Journal Publications

Pooley, C. I. Douglas, A. and Pearce, R. G. (1983). The Seismic Disturbance of 1976 March 20, East Kazakhstan: earthquake or explosion?
Geophys J. R. astr Soc, 621-631.

Douglas, A. and Hudson, J. A. (1983). Comments on "Time Functions Appropriate for Nuclear Explosions" by L. J. Burdick and D. V. Helmberger and "Seismic Source Functions and Attenuation from Local and Teleseismic Observations of the NTS Events Jorum and Handley" by D. V. Helmberger and D. M. Hadley.
Bull Seism Soc Am, 73, 1255-1264.

Douglas, A. (1984). Teleseismic Observations of Aftershocks immediately following an underground explosion.
Geophys J. R. astr Soc, 77, 503-515.

Bache, T. C., Marshall, P. D. and Bache, L. B. (1985). Q for Teleseismic P waves from Central Asia.
J. Geophys Research, 98, 3575-3587.

Douglas, A. (1987). Differences in Upper Mantle Attenuation between the Nevada and Shagan River Test Sites: Can the effects be seen in P-wave seismograms?
Bull Seism Soc Am, 77, 270-276.

Stewart, R. C. and Marshall, P. D. (1988). Seismic P-waves from Novaya Zemlya explosions: seeing double!
Geophysical Journal, 92, 335-338.

Douglas, A. and Rivers, D. W. (1988). An explosion that looks like an earthquake.
Bull Seism Soc Am. 78, 1011-1019.

Marshall, P. D. Stewart, R. C. and Lilwall, R. C. (1989). The seismic disturbance on 1986 August 1 near Novaya Zemlya; a source of concern?
Geophysical Journal, 98, 565-573.

AWE O Reports

Douglas, A., J. A. Hudson, B. J. Barley, (1981). Complexity of Short Period P Seismograms: What does Scattering Contribute?
AWRE Report No. O 3/81.

Bache, T. C. Marshall, P. D. and J. B. Young, (1984). Q and its Effect on Short Period P Waves from Explosions in Central Asia.
AWRE Report No. O 17/84.

Marshall, P. D., T. C. Bache and R. C. Lilwall, (1984). Body Wave Magnitudes and Locations of Soviet Underground Explosions at the Semipalatinsk Test Site.
AWRE Report No. O 16/84.

Marshall, P. D., R. C. Lilwall and Jean Farthing, (1986). Body Wave Magnitudes and Locations of Underground Nuclear Explosions at the Nevada Test Site, 1971-1980.
AWRE Report No. O 21/86.

Lyman, N. S., A. Douglas, P. D. Marshall and J. B. Young, (1986). P Seismograms Recorded at Eskdalemuir, Scotland from Explosions in Nevada, USA.
AWRE Report No. O 10/86.

Lilwall, R. C. and P. D. Marshall, (1986). Body Wave Magnitudes and Locations of Soviet Underground Explosions at the Novaya Zemlya Test Site.
AWRE Report No. O 17/86.

Lilwall, R. C., P. D. Marshall and D. W. Rivers, (1988). Body Wave Magnitudes of some Underground Nuclear Explosions at the Nevada (USA) and Shagan River (USSR) Test Sites.
AWE Report No. O 15/88.

Stewart, R. C., (1988). P-wave Seismograms from Underground Explosions at the Shagan River Test Site Recorded at Four Arrays.
AWE Report No. O 4/88.

Gillbanks, T. G. A., P. D. Marshall and R. C. Stewart, (1989). P-wave Seismograms Recorded at Yellowknife, Canada from Underground Nuclear Explosions in Nevada, USA.
AWE Report No. O 26/88.

Lilwall, R. C. and J. B. Young, (1989). Broad-band P Wave Seismograms of 6 Underground Explosions in the USA Recorded at a Selection of LRSM Stations.
AWE Report No. O 2/89.

Porter, Mrs. D. and Mrs. P. Peachell, (1990). Some Seismic Results from the US-USSR Joint Verification Underground Nuclear Explosions.
AWE Report No. O 6/90.

Marshall, P. D., R. C. Lilwall and Miss J. Farthing, (1990). Estimates of the Teleseismic Magnitudes of some Early Nevada Test Site Explosions.
AWE Report No. O 13/90.

Lilwall, R. C. and Miss J. Farthing, (1990). Joint Epicentre Determination of Soviet Underground Nuclear Explosions 1973-89 at the Semipalatinsk Test Site.
AWE Report No. O 12/90.

It would not be in the national interest to reveal how many classified studies have been undertaken.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Community Charge Benefit

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people in Wales are receiving community charge benefit; what assessment he has made of the level of awareness among potential beneficiaries of the availability of this benefit; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Full information from the Department's statistical surveys is not yet available, but it is estimated that currently nearly 600,000 individual charge payers in Wales are receiving community charge benefit. Most local authorities undertook publicity to ensure that potential claimants were aware that they might be entitled to benefit, and the Government have publicised the benefit scheme through television and newspaper advertisements and leaflets. Awareness of community charge benefit is generally high.

Statistical Surveys

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he expects to receive the results of the statistical surveys being carried out by his Department on family credit and community charge benefit.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Information from statistical surveys about family credit claimants who are, or are not, also receiving community charge benefit should be available in the early summer of 1991.

Pensions

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the comparable level of pension and contributions towards pensions in *(a)* Luxembourg, *(b)* Belgium, *(c)* the Netherlands, *(d)* Denmark and *(e)* the United Kingdom.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: In general, it is very difficult to make meaningful comparisons between pension schemes in different countries because there are many fundamental differences in the way they are run. It is also very misleading to compare only the weekly rate of state pension payable, as there are many other factors to take into account.

For example, most other EC countries operate fully earnings-related state pension schemes—Luxembourg and Belgium fall into this category. This means that the rate of pension payable depends on the individual pensioner's earnings level during working life, and consequently there is a wide variation in the rate of pension paid from one person to another.

In making a comparison of the situation in the countries mentioned, such factors as the other benefits covered by the contribution, the employee—employer contribution split, the provision of pensions for dependent spouses and the availability of additional pensions must be taken into account, and the cost of living.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the maximum state earnings additional pension payable in each year since 1978; and if he will give a projection for each year to 1999 consistent with his answer of 5 April 1990, *Official Report*, column *788-89*.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The information requested is set out in the table. The amounts apply to a person in full-time employment who has received earnings at or above the upper earnings limit for national insurance contributions and retires on 6 April in each year, assuming price rises of 5 per cent. per year and average earnings increasing by 7 per cent. per year effective from April 1991.

Year of retirement	*Additional pension at retirement (£pw)*
1978	nil
1979	1·30
1980	2·90
1981	5·25
1982	8·45
1983	11·70
1984	15·10
1985	19·10
1986	23·25
1987	28·50
1988	34·00
1989	40·45
1990	48·65
1991	56·00
1992	63·95
1993	72·75
1994	82·50
1995	93·10
1996	104·70
1997	117·40
1998	131·30

Test Claim Procedure

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many special payments were made to people who were prevented from making a claim during the 1985 miners' strike owing to the test claim procedure and did not follow up with a claim within a year, in the latest available year;

(2) how many special payments were made to people who were prevented from making a claim owing to the test claim procedure and did not follow up with a claim within a year, in the latest available year.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Following a decision of the social security commissioners in 1989, a number of claims from canteen workers and cleaners involved in the 1985 miners' strike were reviewed. Extra-statutory payments relating to arrears of benefit were made as follows:

Unemployment benefit cases = 220 payments
Supplementary benefit cases = 5 payments

During the last five years, no other special payments of benefit have been made to claimants who were prevented from making a claim owing to the test claim procedure.

Female Employment

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Security if he will give a breakdown of female emplo in his Department by grade, giving salary bands.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The table shows the num women in each grade. To give the salary bands wo disproportionately expensive. A copy of the "Civil S Pay and Conditions of Service Code", which gives details, is in the Library.

Number of female staff by grade in DSS

Grade	*Number*
Grade 1	—
Grade 2 and equivalent	—
Grade 3 and equivalent	5
Grade 4 and equivalent	—
Grade 5 and equivalent	23
Grade 6 and equivalent	40
Grade 7 and equivalent	82
SEO and equivalent	221
HEO and equivalent	1,824
EO and equivalent	12,943
AO and equivalent	28,886
AA and equivalent	10,638
Secretarial/typing	2,217
Support	763
Others	29
Total	57,671

Housing Benefit

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Security what is his estimate of the number of peop would be denied housing benefit if the Housing (General) Amendment No. 3 Regulations implemented; and what is his estimate of the net sa

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The indications are relatively few people in residential care and nursing are currently receiving housing benefit to help wit accommodation costs. Under the proposals, all tho registered residential care or nursing home who entitled to housing benefit on 29 October, or wh submitted a claim on or before that date wh subsequently determined in their favour, would entitlement under the current rules and, conseq there would be no financial saving. Any potential s from possible future claims can only be a mat speculation.

Direct Credit Transfers

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Security (1) if he intends making any changes to the Security (Claims and Payments) Regulations regulation 21(1), allowing for payment into a clai account by way of automated or other direct transfer;

(2) if he will give the number of direct credit tr made for income support and for invalidity benefit, latest available year;

(3) what instructions his Department issues t receiving a request for a direct credit transfer wh automated credit transfer cannot be made.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: There are no propos change the Social Security (Claims and Pay

Regulations 1987 affecting payment of benefit by credit transfer. Arrangements are not yet available for payments of income support or invalidity benefit to be made by credit transfer which is at present restricted to beneficiaries paid by computer. The Department's staff are aware of these arrangements.

National Insurance

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the net additional cost to his Department of the changes to employer's national insurance contributions and reimbursement announced in the autumn statement.

Mr. Scott: No net additional cost is expected.

Direct Deductions

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the reasons for which direct deduction from income support can be made, including those announced but not yet in force, indicating in each case *(a)* whether it can be made without the claimant's agreement, *(b)* the maximum rate level of deduction and *(c)* the date on which it came into force.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The information requested is in the table.

Type of deduction	*Claimant's agreement needed?*	*Current maximum amount of weekly arrears deduction*	*Date of coming into force*
1. Accommodation and Utility Costs			
(a) Housing costs	Yes	£1·85	April 1988—carried forward from Supplementary Benefit
(b) Miscellaneous accommodation costs	Yes	Nil	
(c) Service charges for fuel and rent not falling within *(a)*	Yes	£1·85	
(d) Fuel charges	Yes	£1·85 (£3·70 if only one fuel deduction)	
(e) Water charges	Yes	£1·85	
2. Community Charge	No	£1·85 (£2·90 for a couple)	8 April 1989—Scotland 1 April 1990—England and Wales
3. Overpayment Recovery	No	£5·55 (£7·20 in cases of proven fraud)	April 1988—carried forward from Supplementary Benefit

Notes:

1. Deductions for community charge are made following a court order. Overpayment recovery is initiated on behalf of the Secretary of State.
2. Deductions for current charges may be made under item 1 in addition to deductions for arrears. The claimant's written consent is sought before the total of deductions for arrears and current use of utilities is allowed to exceed 25 per cent. of the Income Support applicable amount (excluding housing costs) for the family.
3. Deductions may also be made to recover a social fund loan. The rate of recovery is determined after taking into account existing deductions and other known debts.
4. Deductions from income support for fines are proposed in the Criminal Justice Bill now before the House. They would be made by order of a court and, at current rates, would be £1·85 per week.
5. The White Paper "Children Come First" published on 29 October 1990 proposes deduction of 5 per cent. of the income support of an unemployed claimant who is liable to maintain a child.

Child Care

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many whole-time equivalent child care places are provided for staff in his Department; and how many places are provided per 100 employees.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: As at 1 November 1990 the Department of Social Security has 80,486 staff, and provides 67 full-time places for pre-school children and access to over 1,400 places on holiday play schemes for children of school age.

Industrial Disputes

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what leaflets are produced providing benefits advice for people involved in or affected by an industrial dispute.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The claim form for people affected by an industrial dispute (form B71D) contains an information page. Additionally, the guide to income support (leaflet IS20) contains a section which gives information to people involved in or affected by an industrial dispute.

Child Benefit

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish the totals and categories of families who will face clawbacks in other benefits as a result of the planned increase in child benefit for the first born.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: It is estimated that the planned adjustment of benefit paid for a child for whom the higher rate of child benefit is payable would affect approximately 192,000 families in the categories shown in the table. The effect of the adjustment is that the benefits and increases of benefit payable for the child for whom the higher rate of child benefit is payable would be increased to £9·70 per week from April 1991.

	Number of families
Child dependency increases of:	
Industrial death benefit	1,333
Invalid care allowance	3,778
Severe disablement allowance	1,222
Invalidity benefit	106,111
Retirement pension	18,308
Widow's benefit	59,200

	Number of families
Benefit	
Guardian's allowance	2,023
Child's special allowance	346

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will state by what means his Department intends to effect the forthcoming uprating of child benefit; and whether additional staffing resources will be made available to do so.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Child benefit is paid by credit transfer or order books produced by computerised processes at our central office in Newcastle. The reprogramming necessary to put the increase into effect can be contained within existing staff resources.

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the cost of disregarding child benefit in the calculation of income support and family credit.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 20 November 1990]:* Child benefit is taken into account in the assessment of income support just as it always was in the assessment of supplementary benefit. It is also ta account in the assessment of housing bene community charge benefit. Although it is not tr income in the assessment of family credit, child b taken into account when the credit levels are set.

The net cost of disregarding child benefit assessment of income support, housing bene community charge benefit is estimated to be arou billion a year. The cost of ignoring child bene setting the credits for family credit would be arou million a year, including the knock-on effect of i family credit on other income-related benefits.

Family Credit

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State fo Security what assessment he has made of the p effect of the Family Credit (General) Am Regulations 1990 (S.I., 1990, No. 574) upon fa Scotland due to the earlier conclusion of the scho and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The amendment practical effect on families in Scotland or elsewh its purpose was merely to clarify the existing le and no change in policy or practice was involved

Invalid Care Allowance

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what assessment his Department has made of the situation of carers of pensionable age who did not initially qualify for invalid care allowance on age grounds and therefore do not now qualify for the carers premium; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: Invalid care allowance is an income maintenance benefit for those who have to forgo the opportunity of full-time employment because they spend at least 35 hours per week caring for a severely disabled person who receives attendance allowance or constant attendance allowance. Although entitlement to invalid care allowance established before pension age may be carried forward after age 60-65, it would in general be true that those over retirement age are not forgoing full-time employment. We are nevertheless keeping the situation of carers under consideration. We have already announced the increase of the earnings limit for invalid care allowance recipients from £20 to £30 with effect from April 1991 which we expect will help 5,000 carers. We introduced the carer premium from October in the income-related benefits—income support, housing benefit and community charge benefit—which we expect will assist a further 30,000 claimants, many of whom did not qualify for any premium before its introduction. In common with others on income-related benefits, people who start caring after reaching pensionable age have access to one of the three pensioner premiums. We are extending the carer premium from October next year so that it can be paid for up to eight weeks after caring ceases.

SCOTLAND

House Sales

Mr. Maxton: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many sales Scottish Homes completed under *(a)* right to buy, *(b)* rent to mortgage, *(c)* portable discount and *(d)* vacant possession in each month from April to the latest available date.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is set out in the following table:

Number of sales: 1990

	Right to buy	*Rent to mortgage*	*Portable discount scheme*	*Vacant possession sales*
1990				
April	198	1	15	23
May	82	0	1	8
June	120	0	4	5
July	210	0	9	5
August	234	3	6	10
September	211	19	9	15
October	n/a	59	n/a	n/a

n/a—Not available.

Mr. Maxton: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what income Scottish Homes received in capital receipts from house sales in the first quarter of 1990-91, and in the second quarter of 1990-91.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The element of Scottish Homes income from capital receipts relative to house sales was £5·744 million in the first quarter of 1990-91 and £9·053 million in the second quarter of 1990-91.

Tenancies

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* any statutory rights that tenants will lose as a result of the ownership of their public sector or former Scottish Special Housing Association tenancies being transferred by the exercise of tenants' rights to voluntary transfer to an alternative public sector landlord.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Tenants who wish to exercise the statutory right under part III of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1988 and transfer to a new landlord would give up their secure tenancy and transfer on an assured tenancy basis.

Tenants transferring by this route would lose their statutory right to buy but could enter a contractual agreement with their new landlord to preserve a form of RTB.

Tenants including new town development corporation tenants transferring to Scottish Homes would transfer as secure tenants.

Countryside Commission

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the budget for the Countryside Commission (Scotland) for 1989-90, and what is the proposed budget for 1990-91.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Grant-in-aid to the Countryside Commission for Scotland for these years is as follows:

	£ million
1989-90	5·785
1990-91	6·358

Families

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will review his policies towards protection of the family unit in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The protection of the family in Scotland is a key feature of Government policy and is kept under constant review. In the field of family law, the Scottish Law Commission is engaged in a major project on the law of children. This includes the scope of parental rights and duties, the custody and guardianship of children, and the legal capacity and responsibility of young people.

Tenancies

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* those sections of housing statutes which determine the power and procedures whereby alternative private sector landlords may acquire a heritable title to former public sector or Scottish Special Housing Association properties.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The provision whereby private sector landlords are able to acqure a title to public sector housing stock are contained primarily in part III of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1988.

Local authorities also have a general power of disposal in section 12 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 and Scottish Homes have a similar power in section 2(2)(h) of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1988.

New town development corporations have a general power of disposal under section 3(2) as read with sections 18-18C of the New Towns (Scotland) Act 1968.

Divorce

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the cost of legal aid for actions of divorce in each of the last five years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is as follows:

Year	*Sheriff court* *Cost £*	*Court of session* *Cost £*	*Total* *£*
1985-86	2,297,092	6,254,678	8,551,770
1986-87	3,901,527	5,402,408	9,303,935
1987-88	5,367,722	3,931,564	9,299,286
1988-89	5,330,902	2,223,971	7,554,873
1989-90	5,271,029	1,309,665	6,580,694

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what quantity of *(a)* low and *(b)* intermediate level nuclear waste has been generated by Scottish nuclear power stations annually since 1985.

Mr. Lang: Questions about operational aspects of nuclear power stations in Scotland are a matter for the operators concerned.

Government Researchers

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will provide to all Government-commissioned researchers a written undertaking of their right to publish completed work after three months; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: My Department strongly supports the principle of disseminating research findings. Every opportunity is taken to encourage the communication of these findings to those who might benefit. Practice varies according to the needs and circumstances applying in individual cases. For instance, it may be necessary to take steps to safeguard the confidentiality of information relating to identifiable individuals or institutions which may be obtained in the course of a research project. It is my intention that this policy should continue.

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list research projects commissioned by his Department which remain unpublished one year or more after completion; and if he will make a statement in respect of each.

Mr. Rifkind: The publication of the reports of research projects is governed by contracts between researchers and my Department. The general policy of the Scottish Office is to encourage the dissemination of researc publication of reports or by other means. In Department standing in the way of publi finding of research projects which have been more than one year.

Local Enterprise Companies

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary Scotland if he will make a statement on the r of *(a)* women, *(b)* representatives of service *(c)* persons representative of the wider c steering groups preparing business pla enterprise companies.

Mr. Lang: Local enterprise companie organisations and individual appointments for the companies themselves, subject requirement that at least two-thirds of the m board of each company are to be drawn fro sector.

Local Government Finance

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary Scotland if he will print in the *Official Repo* used to determine the revenue grants for the year for each of the regional councils including the population levels used in de grant-aided expenditure figure.

Mr. Rifkind: There are basically two procedure for distributing aggregate exter local authorities. First, an amount is distri authorities to equalise differences in thei expenditure (GAE). The GAE of each determined by the client group assessment ap is agreed with COSLA and kept under regu the distribution committee of the working government finance. Secondly, the rest of distributed on a per capita basis.

Details of the population estimates calculation of the 1991-92 GAE figures are the booklet "Grant Aided Expenditure so-called green book) published by my D copy of this publication is in the House Li

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of Stat if he will list the latest available information, authority in Scotland, as to the numbers 1989-90 and 1990-91 who *(a)* have or *(b)* h paying the poll tax and the percentage of liable adults that represents.

Mr. Lang: The information requested centrally. It is understood however that authorities have already collected or expect 90 per cent. of the total community charge for 1989-90 and that their collection rates f at present following broadly the same patte

Access Funds

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary Scotland on what principles he allocated th to each of the colleges under his control.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 1990]:* The access fund were allocated on t

number of eligible students in attendance at the Scottish colleges of education and central institutions during session 1989-90.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much money he has allocated in access funds to each of the colleges under his control.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 22 November 1990]:* The information requested is set out below and relates to Session 1990-91.

Institution	£
Craigie college of education	9,551
Duncan of Jordanstone college of art	46,871
Dundee institute of technology	78,147
Edinburgh college of art	50,229
Glasgow college of technology	107,359
Glasgow school of art	42,421
Jordanhill college of education	46,097
Moray House college of education	43,419
Napier polytechnic	201,953
Northern college of education	35,063
Paisley college of technology	107,770
Queen Margaret college	49,826
Queens college, Glasgow	37,014
Robert Gordons institute of technology	135,745
Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama	21,897
St. Andrew's college of education	19,283
Scottish agricultural colleges	17,628
Scottish College of Textiles	23,291

Dounreay

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what evidence his Department has received of nuclear-related dangers in the Dounreay area.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 23 November 1990]:* My right hon. and learned Friend has recieve no evidence of any nuclear-related dangers in the Dounreay area. All activities at nuclear establishments have to meet the requirements of the regulatory authorities. Permitted levels of radioactive discharges are very low and well within internationally agreed limits. Regular monitoring reveals no evidence of harm to the surrounding environment as a result of these discharges.

While there is no evidence of a causal link between the incidence of childhood leukaemia and nuclear installations, the Committee on the Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment has prompted a number of medical studies and these will be published as they become available.

Development Corporation Houses

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are his most recent proposals for the handover of development corporation houses to other housing authorities prior to the wind-up of the Scottish new towns; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 23 November 1990]:* The Government's proposals on the transfer of development corporation houses remain unchanged from those set out in the White Paper "The Scottish New Towns: The Way Ahead" (Cm. 711). That states:

"The position in each town will be carefully considered once an order for dissolution has been made, and formal consultations will be held with development corporations, district councils and representative tenant groups to review the position and to determine to what extent transfers might take place, be it to housing associations, co-operatives, district councils, private or other landlords. Those tenants who have not transferred to other landlords will be transferred to Scottish Homes at wind-up, with a view to pursuing further diversification with the small residual number of houses".

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Mink

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether Pentobarbitone is authorised for the killing of farmed mink.

Mr. Maclean: Pentobarbitone is an approved drug for use in the euthanasia of all species of farm livestock.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of the environmental needs of farmed mink; and if he will make the amendments necessary to the existing orders to make provision for such needs.

Mr. Maclean: I have received a statement on fur farming from the Farm Animal Welfare Council, and the Council of Europe has recently agreed a recommendation concerning the welfare of fur-bearing animals under the convention for the protection of animals kept for farming purposes.

Contracting parties must implement this recommendation and for member states of the European Community it is likely that the Commission will propose Community legislation. Existing legislation in this country relates to security on mink farms and would not be a suitable vehicle for welfare matters.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he takes to ensure the proper qualifications of those involved in the killing of farmed mink; and what records he keeps of such personnel.

Mr. Maclean: There is no requirement for any farmers to receive training in the methods of killing their own livestock. Nevertheless, when this is done it must be undertaken with due care and humanity.

Mr. Maclean: The minimum specifications for the guard fence of a mink enclosure are laid down in Schedule 2 paragraph 2 of the Mink (Keeping) Regulations, 1975 (as amended). This states "enclosures shall be bounded by a guard fence consisting of wire netting of not less than 19 gauge with a mesh size not greater than 26mm or, alternatively, welded mesh of not less than 15 gauge with a mesh size not greater than 26mm × 40mm. The fence shall be not less than 1·20m high above ground level. The base of the fence shall be buried in the ground to a depth of at least 300mm and turned outwards at the bottom at right angles for at least 150mm or shall be embedded in a trench of the same depth the bottom of which shall be provided with a foundation at least 150mm wide on each side and at least 150mm deep of either concrete or of consolidated hard core of brick or concrete rubble or of similar or solid and durable material. At the top of the fence there shall be flat sheet metal at least 300mm deep securely attached to the inside of the wire netting and to any fence post inside the enclosure so as to form a continuos baffle leaving no gap between the wire and the sheet metal."

Agricultural Support

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what has been the total level of expenditure on agricultural support in each of the last 10 years; and what level is forecast for each of the next three years.

Mr. Curry: Details of agricultural support in the United Kingdom for the 1985-86 to 1989-90 (forecast) are set out in the publication "Agriculture in the United Kingdom 1989". Figures for preceding years are contained in the Annual Review of Agriculture White Papers. These publications are available in the Library of the House.

The final outturn for 1989-90 and forecasts for the next three years (rounded to the nearest £10 million) are as follows:

	£ million
1989-90 (outturn)	1,260
1990-91 (forecast)	1,960
1991-92 (plans)	1,910
1992-93 (plans)	2,030

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how he intends to compensate farmers for income lost as a result of the 30 per cent. cut in farm support agreed at the recent meeting of European Community Agriculture Ministers.

Mr. Curry: The EC Commission has undertaken to make proposals for Community measures to accompany any agreement reached in the current GATT negotiations to reduce levels of agricultural support worldwide. The Council of Ministers will discuss the Commission's proposals under its normal procedures.

Drainage Authorities

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the grant earning ceiling determined for internal drainage boards in England and Wales for 1990-91.

Mr. Curry: Grant earning ceilings, which determine the amount of flood defence expenditure in a financial year on which grant will be paid, are allocated to the National Rivers Authority, who undertake each year a substantial number of schemes. For internal drainage boards, of whom only a proportion will promote schemes in a single financial year, grant expenditure is constrained within an overall provision for all boards, and grant is paid when schemes have been approved by my Department. In 1990-91 in England grant provision to IDBs is £1·7 million.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales can provide information on the position in Wales.

Livestock Payments

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what has been the total level of livestock payments in the United Kingdom for each of the last five years; if he will list the payments made under each scheme; and what proportion of each scheme is financed by the European Community.

Mr. Curry: Information on payments under the various measures that benefit the United Kingdom livestock sector is contained at table 9.1 of "Agriculture i Kingdom 1989" a copy of which is in the l House.

The market support measures generally a cent. funding by the European Community, c suckler cow premium scheme payments inclu of national funding that does not att contribution; and the Community contribu cent. of eligible expenditure in Great Britai in Northern Ireland from 1990) under the compensatory allowance scheme.

Flood Defences

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister o Fisheries and Food what criteria are used i the eligibility of a proposed coastal prot flood and sea defence scheme for grant aid

Mr. Curry: For coast protection and flo sea, defence schemes to qualify for grant aid technically sound, economically worthwhil sufficient benefit to justify the cost), and en sympathetic. To satisfy the last of these crite proposals must be acceptable to the Nature Council, and have satisfied the requirement 1217 The Land Drainage Improve (Assessment of Environmental Effects) Reg or S.I. 1199 The Town and Country Plannin of Environmental Effects) Regulations 198 applicable.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister o Fisheries and Food what are the reasons available to individual regions or local d National Rivers Authority for fluvial flood a schemes being lowest in primarily urba highest in primarily agricultural regions.

Mr. Curry: The amount of grant av individual region or local district of the N Authority depends on the size of its progra work, and its financial resources. These fac into account in setting the grant earning c basic grant rate.

In the past three years, the numbe approved for grant is about 270, and their cost is around £110 million. Of these schem will afford protection to agricultural land a estimated cost is just over £7 million. The m number and value, are schemes providing alone.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister o Fisheries and Food whether, since his rep Member for Caerphilly of 18 December *Report*, column *878*, he has become environmentally damaging land drainage scheme going ahead in the face of ob conservation bodies.

Mr. Curry: The environmental implic drainage and sea defence schemes submitte are examined carefully and confirmation is Nature Conservancy Council are cont proposals and that the requirements of eith Land Drainage Improvement Works (Environmental Effects) Regulations 1988,

The Town and Country Planning (Assessment of Environmental Effects) Regulations 1988 as appropriate, have been satisfied. In respect of all land drainage or sea defence schemes, grant-aided or not, drainage authorities have a duty under the Water Act 1989 to further conservation, and they are also obliged to fulfil the requirements of S.I. 1217 or S.I. 1199 for, respectively, improvement works and new works.

These statutory requirements are intended to ensure that consultation takes place prior to works being undertaken, and that environmentally damaging works are avoided. I am not aware that any environmentally damaging land drainage or sea defence scheme has gone ahead in the face of objections from conservation bodies.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what levels of service drainage authorities are expected to provide when assessing the need for or designing new schemes to protect urban areas and agricultural land from fluvial and sea flooding.

Mr. Curry: Drainage authorities are aware that their proposals for flood defence schemes must satisfy Ministry criteria, namely be technically sound, economically worthwhile and environmentally sympathetic; the Ministry's consideration involves a judgment of the appropriate level of service as well as priority and need for works. The Ministry does not prescribe levels of service, nor is a national prescription considered appropriate. However we are encouraging further work to establish the methodology for setting levels of service, which are expected to be a more prominent feature of judgments about the timing and nature of works, and hence to play a greater part in planning programmes. We are aware, for instance, that the National Rivers Authority are addressing the question as part of the corporate planning process.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will review the rates of grant for fluvial flood and sea defence schemes available to individual regions or local districts of the National Rivers Authority.

Mr. Curry: In undertaking fluvial flood defence schemes individual regions or local districts of the National Rivers Authority may attract grant at one of four rates: 15 per cent., 35 per cent., 45 per cent., 55 per cent. Allocation of these rates takes account of a region's or district's facility to raise finance and the programme of grant aided works being undertaken. If one or both of these factors change, a region or district may qualify for a higher or lower grant rate.

Additionally, sea and tidal defence schemes attract a supplement which, in April of this year, was increased from 15 per cent. to 20 per cent. I have no current plans for a further review of the present rates of grant, which offer support up to 75 per cent. of the cost of a scheme.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the continued viability of farm businesses in the light of the subsidy cuts agreed by the European Community's submission to the GATT round.

Mr. Curry: The Community offer on agricultural reform remains under negotiation in the GATT Round. It is premature to forecast the final agreement or its impact. The Commission has given an undertaking to make proposals for changes in agricultural support, consistent with a GATT agreement, aimed at ensuring a viable future for Community farmers.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will indicate the priority given in the allocation of grant aid to drainage authorities between the classes of *(a)* urban sea defence, *(b)* rural sea defence, *(c)* urban flood relief, *(d)* the preservation of existing rural drainage schemes, *(e)* new rural drainage schemes and *(f)* flood warning schemes.

Mr. Curry: In the main the order of priority given in the allocation of grant provision to the National Rivers Authority (and their predecessors, the Water Authorities) is: flood warning schemes; urban sea defence; urban flood relief; rural sea defence; the preservation of existing rural drainage schemes; new rural drainage schemes. This order of priorities is also kept in mind in allocating grant to schemes undertaken by local authorities and internal drainage boards, but no scheme would be rejected for grant solely because of its position in the above order of priorities.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on how many occasions over the last six-year period an application for a licence for a mink farm has been refused; and if he will give for each case the relevant reason.

Mr. Maclean: No licences for mink farms have been refused over the last six years in Great Britain.

Quarantine (Dogs)

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether there are any special provisions made by his Department, in the context of the six-month mandatory quarantine provision for dogs entering the United Kingdom, in order to enable guide dogs for blind people to enter accompanying a blind person, and not to be restricted by quarantine.

Mr. Maclean: There are no special provisions for the import of guide dogs. Having considered all the evidence, including that from the Guide Dogs for the Blind Association, the Waterhouse committee recommended that no exemptions to general rabies quarantine requirements should be permitted.

Bananas

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is Her Majesty's Government's policy towards trade preferences for Caribbean bananas after 1992.

Mr. Curry: The European Commission is currently considering the arrangements to apply to bananas post-1992 but has not yet come forward with proposals. We are encouraging the Commission and other member states to ensure that any new arrangements fulfil our commitments to Commonwealth Caribbean suppliers and that they take account of consumer interests, trade policy considerations and the competition and efficiency objectives of the single market initiative.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what are the minimum acceptable specifications for the perimeter guard fences of mink farms.

Foxes

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what actual expenditure is incurred by his Department in controlling the numbers of the wild fox population.

Mr. Maclean: The responsibility for fox control rests with the occupiers of land.

Agricultural Industry

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will give an estimate of the number of people earning their living in the United Kingdom agriculture industry in each year since 1979; and if he will make a statement concerning Government policy towards that industry.

Mr. Curry: The number of persons recorded as being engaged in agriculture in the United Kingdom are shown in the table.

	Total number engaged in agriculture (thousand)	*of which whole-time (thousand)*
1979	740·3	402·6
1980	725·1	388·1
1981	709·9	379·2
1982	705·6	374·5
1983	699·3	370·5
1984	691·2	363·2
1985	690·6	356·0
1986	679·9	346·3
1987	666·2	336·0
1988	658·5	327·5
1989	644·9	318·1
[1]1990	638·4	307·7

[1] Provisional.

Food Manufacturing and Processing Industry

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will give an estimate of the number of people employed in the United Kingdom food manufacturing and processing industry in each year since 1979; and if he will make a statement concerning Government policy towards that industry.

Mr. Curry: Our main objective is, through for example financial and other support for Food From Britain, to encourage the food industry to take the fullest advantage of the opportunities being opened up by the completion of the Single European Market at the end of 1992.

Available figures of numbers of people employed in the industry are shown below.

Food manufacturing and processing industry[1]
Numbers of persons employed: Great Britain[2]

Year[3]	*Number of persons*
1979	[4]554,000
1980	[4]544,000
1981	515,000
1982	494,000
1983	466,000
1984	454,000
1985	456,000
1986	448,000
1987	450,000
1988	453,000
1989	460,000
1990	466,000

Source: Department of Employment.

[1] Figures exclude drink manufacture.

[2] Detailed figures not available for Northern Ireland nor for self-employed persons.

[3] Totals shown relate to June of each year.

[4] The standard industrial classification for this industry was amended with effect from 1981, and statistics for 1979 and 1980 are thus not strictly comparable with those for subsequent years.

Advisory Committee (Food)

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he has any plans to establish the implementation advisory committee on food as a permanent committee.

Mr. Maclean: The implementation advisory committee's sole terms of reference are to advise Government Departments on draft codes of practice to be issued for consultation under section 40 of the Food Safety Act 1990. The committee will have completed its task when any necessary codes of practice have been prepared.

Foodstuffs (Inspection)

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what consultation there has been between his Department and local government organisations concerning the implementation of the European Community directive on the official inspection of foodstuffs.

Mr. Maclean: Our officials are in regular contact with local authority organisations about the implementation of the EC directive on the official control of foodstuffs. In particular, they were consulted about the costs if implementing the directive. As a result, the Government are providing an additional £30 million to implement the Food Safety Act 1990 and the directive. Most recently, local authority organisations have been consulted about the statistics on food law enforcement that the Government will collect from local authorities in order to comply with the directive.

Upland Sheep Farmers

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proposals he has to improve the level of incomes among upland sheep farmers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: Sheep farmers in the less favoured areas (LFA) already benefit from a wide range of support measures, including particularly hill livestock compensatory allowances and sheep annual premium. Next year they will benefit additionally from the special 4 ECU per ewe supplement to be paid to producers in the LFA, and from the devaluation of the green pound effective from 7 January 1991.

Bottled Water (Labelling)

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received from Caithness Spring Water Company Ltd. about the labelling of bottled water; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: I have received representations about the need to avoid confusion between the labelling of natural mineral waters and other bottled waters. The views of Caithness Spring Water Company Limited will be taken into account when drawing up regulations on drinking water in containers and in forthcoming discussions on the revised Council directive on the exploitation and marketing of natural mineral waters.

Plaice Quota

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy to consult the Lowestoft Fishing Vessel Owners Association along with other interested parties on all North sea fisheries matters and in particular plaice swaps.

Mr. Curry: The more fragmented the representation of the fishing industry the more difficult it is for the industry to give effective expression to its views on matters about which it is consulted. Moreover, for practical reasons, Fisheries Departments are unable to consult every organisation and individual on every point of fisheries policy. The principal channels of consultation with the fishing industry are therefore through the primary representative organisations. However, the Lowestoft Fishing Vessel Owners Association are provided with copies of all consultation papers on general fisheries policy matters and are able to attend the monthly area IV and VI meetings at which North sea non-sector fisheries matters are discussed. Moreover, we recognise that the association has a major interest in North sea plaice and, if it seemed that a proposed quota swap might lead to restrictions having to be imposed on their members fishing, we would consult the association.

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of the effect of the year by year conceding of United Kingdom plaice quota to European competitors on the plaice fishermen of Lowestoft.

Mr. Curry: Quota exchanges between member states are always entered into without prejudice to the distribution of quotas in future years.

Tuberculosis

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how he estimates the cost-effectiveness of the tuberculosis eradication scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: An economic assessment of badger control policy was undertaken as part of the Dunnet review and was published in 1987 as Government economic service working paper No. 96. It is too early to make such an assessment of policy in relation to deer and action in relation to cattle is dictated by the need to maintain this country's officially tuberculosis-free status under Community rules.

Suckler Cow Premium

Mr. Gill: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when the suckler cow premium for the current year will be paid.

Mr. Curry: Payments of suckler cow premium cannot be made until a claim has been received and checked, and the rate of premium has been determined. This year, the rate of premium in the less favoured areas was increased to the maximum possible. The necessary implementation arrangements were announced on 12 November. Payments have now begun and will be completed as quickly as possible.

Tuberculosis

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the strategy and methods of the control of tuberculosis in respect of *(a)* cattle and *(b)* badgers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: Over the years there has been a significant reduction in the incidence of tuberculosis in cattle. This has been achieved by tuberculin testing the national herd and monitoring slaughterhouses, knackers yards and hunt kennels. Most of the country is now virtually free from the disease, although it is proving more difficult in the south west because of infection in the local badger population. Badger control is based upon the interim strategy recommended by Professor Dunnet. Thought is now being given by the Ministry and the consultative panel on badgers and tuberculosis as to how the live test developed for use in badgers can best be deployed in any revised strategy.

NATIONAL FINANCE

European Monetary System

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish the prediction on the Treasury models of the effect on output and employment in manufacturing industry and in the rest of the economy over the next three years of tying the pound sterling to the Deutschmark at a central rate of 2·95 dollars.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Forecasts of total output and manufacturing output up to 1991 can be found in the autumn statement. We have not published forecasts beyond that, nor do we publish forecasts of employment.

Trusts and Settlements

Mr. Eadie: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish the findings of the review he authorised the Inland Revenue to set up in 1988 to look into the taxation of trusts and settlements as a whole.

Mr. Maude: I am considering the next steps.

Deeds of Covenant

Mr. Eadie: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he proposes to bring forward proposals to amend the provisions of the Finance Act 1988 which abolished tax

relief for non-charitable deeds of covenant with a view to taking into consideration long-stay disabled relatives who require support.

Mr. Maude: I have no plans to do so.

THE ARTS

Christmas Arts Festivals

33. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Minister for the Arts if he has any plans to attend any specifically Christmas arts festivals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: I have no plans to do so at present.

East Midlands

34. **Mr. Tredinnick:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what recent discussions he has had with representatives of the arts from the east midlands; and if he will make a statement.

36. **Mr. Harry Barnes:** To ask the Minister for the Arts when he last met representatives of East Midlands Arts to discuss funding for the arts in the east midlands; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: I met the chairman of East Midlands Arts on 26 September, along with the chairmen of the other regional arts associations, to discuss the proposals for further changes in the structure of the new regional arts boards that I had announced on 24 September.

Enhancement Fund

35. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what criteria he will employ when distributing his new enhancement fund.

Mr. Mellor: I refer the hon. Member to my earlier reply to the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mrs. Golding).

Business Sponsorship

37. **Mr. Atkinson:** To ask the Minister for the Arts how much has been raised to date under the business sponsorship incentive scheme.

Mr. Mellor: Since its inception in October 1984, the business sponsorship incentive scheme has raised over £37 million new money for the arts. Almost £25·5 million has come from business sponsors, to which the Government have added £12·28 million in awards. This is a tremendous achievement.

Nottingham

38. **Mr. Andrew Mitchell:** To ask the Minister for the Arts when he next plans to visit Nottingham to review the extent of artistic and cultural facilities.

Mr. Mellor: I had great pleasure in visiting the excellent Nottingham Playhouse last month. I plan to travel widely in coming months to visit arts organisations around t country and I look forward to a further visit Nottingham.

British Library

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Minister for the Arts what the total number of subscriptions to scientific periodic that has been suspended by the British Library; and if will give a breakdown showing the number suspended a the amount of money saved thereby in each major subj area.

Mr. Mellor: The British Library has suspend subscriptions to a total of 200 scientific periodicals. breakdown by subject area and the savings expected a

	Number	
Agriculture	4	1,
Biology	17	6,
Biomedicine	9	3,
Biochemistry/chemistry	49	20,
Computing (including automation)	7	2,
Ecology/environment	4	1,
Electronics/communications	6	2,
Engineering	19	8,
Mathematics	28	11,
Physics	37	16,
Other (geology, metallurgy, mining, etc.)	20	7,
	200	81,

The library is arranging alternative access wh possible to the scientific journals and hopes to reinst them in 1992. Most of them will continue to be taken the library's document supply centre in Yorkshire.

CIVIL SERVICES

Agencies

43. **Mr. Fisher:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Ser when he last met representatives of the civil service tra unions to discuss the purpose of agency arrangement

Mr. Mellor: The "next steps" project manager m representatives of the Council of Civil Service Unions a regular basis to discuss progress on the initiative.

44. **Mr. John Greenway:** To ask the Minister for Civil Service if he will make a statement about prog towards the creation of agencies.

47. **Mr. Jack:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Ser if he will make a statement on the achievements of agency initiative.

Mr. Mellor: I refer my hon. Friends to the oral ans I gave earlier to my hon. Friend the Member Portsmouth, South (Mr. Martin).

Museum Employees

45. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Ser when he last met civil service trade union leaders to dis matters relating to employees in museums and cer Government heritage bodies.

Mr. Mellor: I intend to meet representatives of various civil service trade unions when appropriat discuss matters of mutual interest.

Morale

46. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service what representations he has received on the question of morale in the civil service.

Mr. Mellor: I have not received any representations about morale in the Civil Service.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 27 November 1990

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Anti-Jewish Literature

Mr. Janner: To ask the Attorney-General how many proceedings have been initiated by the Crown prosecution service in respect of the publishers and distributors of anti-Jewish literature from 1987 until the present; and what was the outcome in each case.

The Attorney-General: I refer the hon. and learned Gentleman to the answer I gave on 13 November, at column *88*.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Asylum

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applicants for political asylum in the United Kingdom are currently awaiting a decision; and how many of these have been waiting for over 12 months.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: It is provisionally estimated that about 27,800 asylum applications were awaiting a decision in the United Kingdom at 30 September 1990, of which about 8,400 had been outstanding for 12 months or more. However these figures are maxima which overstate the position, because of under-recording of decisions made earlier.

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the Dublin convention determining the state responsibility for examining applications for asylum lodged in one of the member states of the European Community will be ratified in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The convention determining the state responsible for examining applications for asylum was signed in Dublin in June by 11 members of the European Community. The ratification process must await a decision by the 12th member, Denmark, on whether to sign the convention.

Postal Voting

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he proposes to introduce the changes regarding postal voting controls in the Representation of the People Act 1990.

Mrs. Rumbold: We propose as soon as possible to make a commencement order to bring the Representation of the People Act 1990 into force. In order for the Act to take effect, it will also be necessary to make some minor amendments to the Representation of the People Regulations 1986 and the European Parliamentary Elections Regulations 1986 and to make an Order in Council in respect of local elections in Northern Ireland.

Child Abuse

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of successful prosecutions for child abuse in Wales for each of the last five years.

Mr. John Patten: The available information is given in the table. It is possible from the information held centrally to identify only offences where the victim is by definition aged under 16: children may also have been the victims of other offences, such as murder, that are not defined by reference to the victim's age.

Total number of defendants found guilty for specific offences involving children
Wales 1985 to 1989

Offence	*Total found guilty*				
	1985	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*
Violence against the person					
Murder of infant under 1 year of age	—	1	—	—	—
Infanticide	—	—	—	1	—
Child destruction	—	—	—	—	—
Cruelty to, or neglect of, children	12	9	24	25	17
Abandoning child aged under 2 years	—	1	—	—	—
Child abduction	1	1	2	3	2
Sexual offences					
Buggery with a boy under the age of 16 or with a woman or an animal	3	9	11	13	6
Attempt to commit buggery with a boy under the age of 16 or with a woman or an animal	—	2	1	2	—
Indecent assault on a male aged under 16 years	25	20	19	13	22
Indecent assault on a female aged under 16 years	81	69	80	87	87
Unlawful sexual intercourse with a girl aged under 13	9	6	7	8	4
Unlawful sexual intercourse with a girl aged under 16	29	19	22	21	15
Incest with girl under 13	5	4	4	5	7
Inciting girl aged under 16 to have incestuous sexual intercourse	—	—	—	1	1
Householder permitting unlawful sexual intercourse with girl aged under 16 years	—	—	1	—	—
Person responsible for girl aged under 16 causing or encouraging her prostitution, etc.	—	—	—	—	—
Abduction of unmarried girl aged under 16	—	—	1	—	2
Gross indecency with children	14	9	14	14	14

Offence	Total found guilty 1985	1986	1987	198
Summary offences				
Violence against the person				
Cruelty to, or neglect of, children	—	—	—	-

Animal Experiments

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will now implement article 24 of European Community directive 86/609/EC to render illegal the use of former track greyhounds in laboratory experiments.

Mrs. Rumbold: At the moment, the only type of dog bred on any scale for scientific procedures is the beagle. In the absence of other types of purpose-bred dogs for use in research, it will remain necessary to grant some exemptions, all of which have to be fully justified scientifically, to the requirement in section 10(3) of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 that only those dogs specially bred at and obtained from designated sources may be used in scientific procedures.

Care is, however, taken to ensure that greyhounds obtained from non-designated sources are neither pets nor ex-racing greyhounds which have been supplied to charitable bodies for rehoming as pets.

Commonwealth Citizens (Voting Rights)

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list those Commonwealth countries the citizens of which, resident in the United Kingdom, are eligible to vote in United Kingdom elections.

Mrs. Rumbold: Citizens of all Commonwealth countries, who are resident in the United Kingdom and who are not otherwise disqualified, are eligible to register as electors and vote at elections here.

Anti-Jewish Literature

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police investigations in respect of anti-Jewish literature are currently under way; and in what month and year each publication was referred to the police.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Information about current investigations is not kept centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Firearms Certificates

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list, for the current year, the number of *(a)* applications for the renewal of and *(b)* applications for a new shotgun certificate made to the North Wales police, and indicate in each case the number of applications which were not dealt with and certificates issued after (i) 28 days and (ii) three months.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: In the North Wales police force area in 1989 there were 6,697 applications for the renewal of shotgun certificates and 1,068 applications for the granting of new shotgun certificates. Figures for 1990 are not yet available. No information is available centrally on the time taken to deal with these applications.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of S
Home Department if he will call for a report fro
constable for north Wales, as to the reasons fo
in processing the application for the renewal o
certificate made by Bryn Havord in April; an
certificate will be issued.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No. The administrati
licensing system under the Firearms Acts 1968
entirely a matter for local chief officers of poli

Magistrates Courts

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of St
Home Department what guidance he issues to
court clerks on the regard they should h
consequences on employers and the public whe
the hearing of cases relating to non-paym
community charge by a large number of person
in the same undertaking; and if he will make a

Mr. John Patten: We have had no evidence
any such guidance is required. There would in
practical difficulties. Courts issue summonses
of applications from the local authority: i
about employment is not included in such ap

Animal Procedures Committee

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of S
Home Department if he will indicate, without
tion of individuals, how many of the 21 mem
Animal Procedures Committee *(a)* currently h
to conduct animal experiments, *(b)* have prev
such licences, *(c)* are currently employed by or
which conduct such experiments and *(d)* have
been so employed.

Mrs. Rumbold: For the reasons set out in m
question from the hon. Member on 12 No
columns *37-38*, I am not prepared to add to t
information given in my answer on 19 No
columns *11-12*.

TRANSPORT

Carbon Monoxide

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary
Transport if he will list those individuals and or
which his Department has consulted in res
proposed introduction of an emission standard
monoxide; and if he will indicate which *(a)* su
proposed standard, *(b)* regarded it as too
regarded it as too lax, *(d)* have yet to rep
requested that their comments be treated as c

Mr. Chope: We have consulted 120 indiv
organisations on our proposals to introduce
exhaust emissions into the MOT test. T
submitted a response. There appears to be stro
for the principle of such a check. I shall mak
announcement on our proposals in the near f

Hazardous Substances

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he remains satisfied with the safety arrangements in place for the road transport of hydrobromic acid.

Mr. Chope: I am satisfied that the regulations for the road transport of dangerous substances, including hydrobromic acid, are adequate.

Northern Line

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the current status of the project to upgrade the Northern line on London underground; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: I understand that London Underground is working up a scheme for the modernisation of the Northern line. I await its proposals.

A30 (Launceston)

Mr. Neale: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress has been made in his review to improve motorists' safety at the Kennards House junction on the A30 trunk road at Launceston.

Mr. Chope: I have agreed that lighting should be installed at this junction. Some changes to road markings are also to be made to help drivers negotiate the junction.

ENVIRONMENT

Planning Procedures

Sir Gerard Vaughan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the dates and circumstances of each occasion when he or a predecessor has exercised his powers in part XV, section 276, of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971; and in each case how much compensation was paid.

Mr. Michael Spicer: In the period 1955 to 1973 there were 18 cases in which my right hon. Friend's predecessors used their default powers to revoke local authority planning permissions. There have been no cases subsequently. The available details are as follows:

Year and details

1955
Orpington Urban District Council: residential development at Lynwood Estate, Orpington.
Chislehurst and Sidcup Urban District Council: residential development between Chislehurst and Sidcup.

1956
Elstree Rural District Council: residential development at Furse Hill Estate, Barnet Lane.

1958
Bletchley Urban District Council: residential development at Watling Street, Bletchley.
Bradford Councty Borough: residential development at Carr Boltom Road, Bradford.

1960
Bullingdon Rural District Council: residential development at Oxford Road, Preston Crownmarsh.
Kerrier Rural District Council: commercial development at Porth Nowas Quay.
North Kesteven Rural District Council: light industrial development at Ripley Drive, North Hykeham.

1961
One case—details not known.

1965
One case—details not known.

1966
Two cases—details not known.

1969
Two cases—details not known.

1970
Two cases—details not known.

1972
Bristol City Council—hotel near Avon Gorge.

1973
London Borough of Richmond—residential development at Rutland Lodge, Petersham.

Further information is not available in the form requested.

Section 276 of the 1971 Act has now been consolidated in sections 100 and 104 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

Catalytic Converters

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if the Government have any plans to provide fiscal incentives to car owners to fit catalytic converters.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Taxation is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Toxic Chemicals (Dumping)

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the progress of the investigations into the illegal dumping of 40 barrels of toxic chemicals in Dunday; and what measures are being taken to prevent such occurrences in the future.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The investigation of this incident is a matter for Avon county council as waste disposal authority for the area in which it occurred. HM inspectorate of pollution is continuing to monitor developments and is prepared to offer advice on arrangements for analysis or safe disposal should such advice be required.

The Environmental Protection Act 1990, which received Royal Assent on 1 November, includes a duty of care to be imposed on all holders of waste to ensure that it is not disposed of or managed illegally. The Act also extends the penalties for the illegal disposal of waste. The maximum fine on summary conviction will be £20,000, and prison terms will be introduced for all offences. On conviction on indictment fines are unlimited and, where special waste is involved, a maximum prison sentence of five years is possible.

River Pollution

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will consider introducing measures to give the National Rivers Authority power to prevent pollution from abandoned mineworkings; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The National Rivers Authority has powers under section 115 of the Water Act 1989 to

carry out works and operations for the purpose of preventing pollution of controlled waters, to take remedial action where pollution has already occurred and to recover the costs of taking such action. These general powers are applicable to abandoned mineworkings. In such cases, the authority may seek to recover costs from any person who caused pollution.

Homelessness

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of the number of homeless people who will be sleeping rough this Christmas.

Mr. Michael Spicer *[holding answer 26 November 1990]:* We do not make forecasts of the number of people who may be sleeping rough at any point in the future. We have recently announced an increase of £80 million in our package of measures to help such people.

Housing Corporation

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the Housing Corporation's approved development programme allocation on current projections by regions in terms of *(a)* original projected expenditure per region, *(b)* current projected expenditure per region, *(c)* original planned number of units for rent and *(d)* current projected number of units for rent.

Mr. Key *[holding answer 26 November 1990]:* This is a matter for the Housing Corporation. I have therefore asked the corporation to respond to the hon. Member direct.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Higher Education

Mr. Knapman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what consideration is being given by his Department to making donations to higher education from industry tax deductible.

Mr. Maude: The tax system already provides incentives to encourage business donations to higher education. Corporation tax relief is available for trade-related company donations for technical education and for cash payments by way of covenants and the gift aid scheme to educational establishments that are charities.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Hong Kong

Mr. Warren: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the reasons for the delay in the development of the new airport at Hong Kong, and when it is now expected to be completed.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: There has been no delay. The Hong Kong Government plan to have the first runway in operation by early 1997.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the number of Vietnamese children under the age of 14 year being held in detention centres in Hong K November.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: On 20 November there children under the age of 14 being held in deter in Hong Kong.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Affairs what was the Vietnamese *(a)* men and *(b)* women who wer in detention centres in Hong Kong on 20 No

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: On 20 November there men and 13,976 women being held in detentio Hong Kong.

Non-proliferation Treaty

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State and Commonwealth Affairs what are the imp the 1995 extension conference of the non-p treaty of the lack of a final document from review conference.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The lack of a final d not prevent the review conference from en continuing importance of the non-proliferati world security. We hope that the conference take a similarly positive line.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a the fourth review conference of the non- treaty.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The NPT review co conducted in a positive atmosphere; ther support for the treaty's objectives and ag reached on most issues. It is to be regretted th on a final document was blocked by one de the conference nevertheless achieved a full r operation of the treaty and demonstrated it importance as a cornerstone of world securit

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State and Commonwealth Affairs if he will ind commitments were made to any of th governmental organisations invited to the c briefing referred to in his answer of 31 O *Official Report,* column *564,* to the hon. Edinburgh, East (Mr. Strang) to clarify in wr not resolved during the meeting of 23 Octob

Mr. Douglas Hogg: As the hon. Ge recognised, the meeting was off the record.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State and Commonwealth Affairs if he will set ou why the United Kingdom Government c inappropriate for preparatory meetings f nuclear non-proliferation treaty to begin in alternative proposals tabled by the th non-proliferation depository powers includi Kingdom.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The preparatory co with administrative arrangements for the r ence, and we see no need for it to meet as early

the alternative proposal by the depository powers, I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the then Minister of State to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas) on 18 October, at column *901*.

Ukraine

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been received from the Government of the Soviet Republic of the Ukraine concerning the return of a barrel of gold deposited with the Bank of England in the early 18th century; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: None.

Test Ban Treaty

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is Her Majesty's Government's policy in respect of participation in negotiations leading to a comprehensive test ban treaty.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: A comprehensive test ban remains a long term goal to which progress will be made only by a step-by-step approach. This must take account of technical advances in verification as well as progress elsewhere in arms control and the attitudes of other states.

Somalia

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will state the reasons for the present closure of the British embassy in Mogadishu, Somalia, until 11 December; if he will state for what period from 11 December the embassy will be reopened, and with what services; and if he will describe the arrangements he proposes to make, for persons currently in Somalia who have been granted visas to enter the United Kingdom but are unable to collect them because of the present closure of the embassy, to enable such persons to travel to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The British embassy in Mogadishu is not closed. All normal services except visas are available. As in many small missions, the consul is the only trained entry clearance officer. During his leave from 21 November to 10 December the issuance of visas is temporarily suspended. The ambassador will assist urgent visitors.

Romania

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will review the Government's policy on aid to Romania.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We frequently review our policy on aid to Romania and shall continue to do so in accordance with developments in that country.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what new initiatives he intends to take to facilitate cultural exchanges between the United Kingdom and Romania.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have agreed with the Romanian Government to have negotiations in Bucharest in February to determine the shape and content of a new cultural exchange programme.

The Gulf (Hostages)

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will place in the Library a list of names of those being held hostage in Iraq and Kuwait; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I am arranging for a list of all those detained in Iraq and Kuwait to be placed in the Library.

Geneva Conventions

Sir Peter Emery: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the status of, and the Government's policy in respect of ratification of *(a)* the protocol additional to the Geneva conventions of 12 August 1949 and relating to the protection of victims of international armed conflicts, protocol 1, and *(b)* the protocol additional to the Geneva conventions of 12 August 1949 and relating to the protection of victims of non-international armed conflicts, protocol 2.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Currently, 97 states are party to additional protocol 1 of the 1949 Geneva conventions. Eighty-seven states are party to additional protocol 2. We signed both additional protocols in 1977, but have yet to ratify them. We hope to come to a decision soon.

ENERGY

Bilsthorpe Power Station

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) what allowance he will make for the non-fossil fuel levy in assessing the financial go-ahead for the Bilsthorpe power station;

(2) what assessment he has made of the economic potential of the Bilsthorpe coal-fired advanced technology power station.

Mr. Baldry: It is for the partners involved in the Bilsthorpe project to assess its economic potential, taking into account the requirement of the Electricity Act 1989 as regards the fossil fuel levy.

British Gas

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what consultations he has had with British Gas regarding the cost of further computer runs to detect multiple share applications for British Gas.

Mr. Wakeham: None.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what representations he has had from the Metropolitan police for further computer runs to detect multiple share applications for British Gas.

Mr. Wakeham: The Department is in discussion with the Crown prosecution service and the police about the investigation and possible prosecution of multiple applications, both for British Gas and the forthcoming regional electricity company share offers.

Energy Conservation

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what additional resources are to be provided to stimulate energy conservation and saving; and if he will list the particular steps which are to be taken or confirmed in 1991.

Mr. Baldry: The Energy Efficiency Office budget will be substantially increased, to £42 million for 1991-92. The EEO will continue to promote a range of programmes designed to encourage the adoption of cost-effective energy efficiency measures.

From January 1991, the new home energy efficiency scheme, replacing the community insulation programme, will offer grants towards the cost of basic energy efficiency measures in low-income households.

During 1991, the EEO will be taking forward the initiatives announced in the White Paper on the environment "This Common Inheritance", Cm. 1200, which include: developing proposals for a new scheme of project management assistance for implementation of energy efficiency projects; considering with the lighting industry how to overcome barriers to the uptake of high-efficiency lighting; pursuing appliance labelling and minimum standards with our own appliance industry and in the EC.

The ministerial committee on energy efficiency, chaired by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy, will maintain the momentum for energy efficiency improvements; monitor the Government's energy efficiency programmes and the White Paper initiatives, and assess the need for further action.

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what steps the Government have taken to encourage regional electricity companies to promote energy conservation after privatisation.

Mr. Baldry: Condition 22 of the supply licences issued to the regional electricity companies imposes an obligation on them to provide information and advice on energy efficiency and to provide individual codes of practice to the Director of the Office of Electricity Regulation—OFFER—setting out their proposals for doing this. Negotiations are continuing between the regional electricity companies and OFFER on the content of the codes.

Domestic Electricity Appliances

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what response has been offered to the European Community proposals to set out energy survey standards for domestic electricity appliances; and to what extent this response fulfils the aspirations and plans which Her Majesty's Government put forward at the recent world climate conference in Geneva.

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) if the Government have any plans to implement legislation requiring energy labelling on electrical goods to enable consumers to be aware of the relative amounts of energy different brands of appliances consume;

(2) if the Government have any plans to introduce legislation requiring minimum energy efficiency standards for all new domestic appliances as part of the programme to combat global warming.

Mr. Baldry: As set out in chapter 5 and annex C of the White Paper on the environment "This Common Inheritance"—Cm 1200—energy efficiency is a part of the Government's strategy to reduce gas emissions.

On appliances, we are pressing for ag energy efficiency labelling and standards European Community. Our own plans for labelling scheme which will lead to improv were outlined at a consultative workshop European Commission earlier this month. W effective voluntary measures can make unnecessary and bring about far swifter imp energy efficiency.

Coal Prices

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of Stat what legal advice was received in relation to t Mr. Heathcote, head of coal division, to Sa Jones, solicitor to the South Wales S Association, dated 22 November, concernin improved coal prices from National Power; place a copy of that letter in the Library.

Mr. Baldry: The letter was drafted in cons representatives, including legal advisers, Power and British Coal. Its contents are confi parties concerned.

Oil and Gas Licences

Mr. David Davis: To ask the Secretary Energy what is his policy on farm-in proposa gas exploration and production licences; a make a statement.

Mr. Wakeham: Transfers of interest i licences, which are commonly known as commercial transactions and, as such, the are initially a matter for the companies con

Under the terms of petroleum lic transactions also need prior consent. Like sors, I believe that farm-ins have the potent United Kingdom oil and gas exploitation. companies operating on the United Kingdo shelf to make what they regard as timely adjustments to their holdings of licence inte are of particular importance to those indepe wish to increase the scale and pace of their pa exploration and development activity.

In examining farm-in proposals, I shall co to ensure that the purpose for which licenc granted—that is the thorough and efficien and exploitation of the nation's oil and ga fully safeguarded by the transactions. It is t practice of my Department to consider each a its merits. In advising me, the Departm particular consider:

(a) the technical competence and financia the company acquiring an interest and as regards the further exploration and the licensed area. These factors are no when the licence is awarded: they c relevant at all stages during the licenc

(b) if the application is received during the the licence, whether satisfactory prog made by the original licensees programme attached to the licence; an

(c) the numbers of licensees on the licence, of any increase on efficient managemen would wish to consider particularly

proposal to increase the number of participants in any licence or field to more than 10. I would generally expect that in the earlier licence stages there would be advantage in licence groups being somewhat smaller than this.

WALES

Wild Foxes

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what annual expenditure is incurred by his Department in controlling the numbers of the wild fox population in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: None. Control of foxes is a matter for individual landowners.

Supply Teachers

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many teaching positions are currently filled by supply teachers in *(a)* the primary sector and *(b)* the secondary sector in Wales according to each local education authority area; and how many positions have been filled by supply teachers in each of the last five years.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The numbers of teachers employed in maintained primary and secondary schools to provide temporary cover for absent teachers on an occasional or short-notice basis are shown in the tables:

Primary Schools[1]

LEA	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*
Clwyd	44	25	54	112	94	106
Dyfed	59	86	53	52	60	47
Gwent	81	104	73	101	130	122
Gwynedd	52	51	54	38	55	56
Mid Glamorgan	133	46	13	72	86	60
Powys	16	15	23	48	58	25
South Glamorgan	42	58	31	82	90	100
West Glamorgan	128	54	34	34	25	47

[1] Figures as at the January enumeration day each year.

Secondary Schools[1]

LEA	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*
Clwyd	51	69	53	61	71	59
Dyfed	40	44	25	38	43	38
Gwent	66	73	69	120	72	83
Gwynedd	55	58	57	36	74	73
Mid Glamorgan	93	44	43	64	91	84
Powys	14	25	21	20	16	47
South Glamorgan	52	48	70	97	103	109
West Glamorgan	70	43	32	20	23	25

[1] Figures as at the January enumeration day each year.

School Books

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the expenditure per pupil on school books in each of the local education authorities in Wales in *(a)* the primary sector and *(b)* the secondary sector in the last year for which figures are available and in each year since 1979 at constant prices.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Figures for expenditure per pupil on equipment and materials, including books, are given at constant prices in the table:

Primary[1] *£/per pupil*

LEA	*1979-80*	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*[2]
Clwyd	23·3	25·1	27·5	26·8	29·1	26·9	24·3	25·4	22·6	20·0
Dyfed	29·5	27·6	33·5	28·3	26·8	22·0	21·5	23·5	27·4	25·7
Gwent	18·0	22·0	23·2	27·6	25·4	23·9	24·9	25·6	27·5	29·1
Gwynedd	21·9	22·2	19·5	21·5	21·8	20·3	20·8	26·6	26·9	26·2
Mid-Glamorgan	24·9	23·0	18·4	23·1	26·8	20·9	25·1	25·5	26·0	27·4
Powys	25·7	20·0	30·3	32·0	31·3	29·0	29·0	31·7	34·4	28·9
South Glamorgan	26·7	23·9	25·8	24·8	26·1	22·3	24·1	25·6	26·9	26·8
West Glamorgan	35·1	34·2	29·4	33·6	32·1	26·2	30·4	36·2	32·8	31·9

Secondary[1] *£/per pupil*

LEA	*1979-80*	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*[2]
Clwyd	40·1	42·7	49·9	48·2	64·3	57·7	50·2	60·8	50·8	47·5
Dyfed	42·9	37·8	44·5	48·5	46·3	39·4	47·2	55·7	79·1	64·7
Gwent	41·1	43·4	46·4	48·5	51·4	59·3	58·3	69·0	68·9	80·5
Gwynedd	42·5	44·1	43·9	44·3	48·0	60·8	52·9	79·3	74·2	64·9
Mid Glamorgan	47·9	44·6	37·1	44·6	46·8	47·9	51·8	73·4	66·3	82·2
Powys	50·3	39·1	55·2	53·0	48·7	80·1	46·8	68·8	67·0	65·8

LEA	1979-80	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89[2]
South Glamorgan	47·7	44·2	44·2	46·6	46·3	42·0	50·0	70·5	60·5	63·9
West Glamorgan	55·1	41·3	40·8	56·6	58·8	53·2	49·8	76·1	70·2	68·6

[1] At 1989-90 prices.
[2] Provisional.

Day Nurseries

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many day nursery places were taken up by pre-school children in Wales during *(a)* 1989 and *(b)* 1990; if he will publish a breakdown of these figures for (i) county council areas and (ii) district council areas; and what percentage of pre-school children in Wales currently take advantage of day nursery places.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The information available for local authority nurseries and private registered nurseries is shown in the table for county council areas. Data for district council areas are not held centrally.

Day nursery places as at 31 March

	Local authority places	Places as a percentage of 3 and 4 year olds	Registered nursery places	Places as a percentage of 3 and 4 year olds
Clwyd				
1989	43	0·4	645	6·4
1990	43	0·4	868	8·3
Dyfed				
1989	—	—	56	0·7
1990	—	—	44	0·5
Gwent				
1989	131	1·1	—	—
1990	131	1·1	243	2·0
Gwynedd				
1989	—	—	189	3·4
1990	—	—	208	3·6
Mid Glamorgan				
1989	—	—	117	0·8
1990	—	—	228	1·5
Powys				
1989	—	—	81	3·0
1990	—	—	85	3·0
South Glamorgan				
1989	61	0·6	548	5·0
1990	38	0·3	728	6·4
West Glamorgan				
1989	29	0·3	276	3·0
1990	29	0·3	289	3·1
Wales				
1989	264	0·4	1,912	2·6
1990	241	0·3	2,693	3·6

The three and four year old pre-school population has been used to calculate percentages.
— Signifies nil.

A487

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales on what date was the draft compulsory purchase order first drawn up to enable the construction of a pavement between Caernarfon and Bontnewydd on the A487 trunk road; on what date an objection was received by the Welsh Office; and what steps have been taken subsequently by his Department to try to resolve this matter.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I have nothing to add to the letter I sent the hon. Gentleman on 19 November in reply to his letter of 2 November.

Roads

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the performance of the roads division of the Welsh Office.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Since 1979, a total of 156 miles of new motorway and trunk roads have been completed, and total expenditure of over £1·2 billion incurred on such roads. This reflects the importance which the Government place on improving and maintaining the road network in Wales.

Planning Procedures

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will ensure that, in determining planning applications which come on appeal to the Welsh Office, sufficient

consideration is given to the wishes of the local community as expressed by the district council; if he will make it his policy that planning appeals should be upheld only if there is a very strong case either on a point of law or on a failure to implement agreed planning strategy at a local level; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: All representations received in respect of a planning appeal are taken into account by my right hon. Friend and his inspectors. The weight given to the views of a district council will depend on the circumstances of the case.

My right hon. Friend's policy is that each appeal is considered on its merits against the relevant planning policies. He considers that the policy suggestions in the question would be contrary to the aims of the planning legislation.

National Rivers Authority

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any plans to increase the staffing levels of the National Rivers Authority Welsh region.

Mr. Grist: This is a matter for the National Rivers Authority.

Exchange Rate Mechanism

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many representations he has received from business interests in Wales on Britain's entry into the exchange rate mechanism and how many indicated *(a)* that the exchange rate was too high against the deutschmark and *(b)* that the exchange rate was too low against the deutschmark.

Mr. David Hunt: None.

HIV

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report*, for the latest available date, the number of children *(a)* who are infected with the HIV virus, (b) who are suffering from AIDS and *(c)* who have died from AIDS.

Mr. Grist: For reasons of confidentiality and in line with the AIDS (Control) Act, numbers betwen one and nine inclusive are given as "less than 10". In each of the three categories cited the number is less than 10.

University Hospital of Wales

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many staff are currently in post at the University hospital of Wales paediatric cardiac surgery unit.

Mr. Grist: The information requested is not available centrally.

Health Authorities (Savings)

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the net projected savings made by health authorities in Wales in the current financial year.

Mr. Grist: The most recent estimates provided by health authorities suggest that the level of savings which they will collectively achieve from their cash-releasing cost improvement programmes this year will be £8·5 million. This is equivalent to 0·9 per cent. of their recurrent revenue allocations notified at the start of 1990-91 and is slightly below the minimum target of 1·1 per cent. of recurrent revenue resources which has been set for cash-releasing cost improvement savings this year. While authorities may count non-recurrent cost improvements such as capital receipts against this target, those doing so will have the recurrent shortfall added to the minimum target for cost improvement savings to be set for 1991-92.

Health Authorities (Buildings)

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to enable health authorities to improve their defective buildings; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: Responsibility for the management and maintenance of the NHS estate in Wales is delegated to district health authorities. They are expected to maintain their buildings to an acceptable standard and to spend a minimum of 7·5 per cent. of their revenue and capital allocations on the maintenance of assets, including buildings.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many health authority buildings still in use were built *(a)* 50 years and *(b)* 100 years ago; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: The information requested is not available centrally.

School Buildings

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to bring defective school buildings up to standard; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Local education authorities are responsible for the condition of school buildings in their areas. Since 1985-86, central Government have increased by 60 per cent. the capital resources notionally made available to local education authorities for the provision of educational buildings and for their capital maintenance.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many schools in Wales in each local education authority were built before 1903; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Details of the ages of school buildings are not held centrally.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many hospital trust applications he has received in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: None, although my right hon. Friend is currently considering the "expression of interest" submitted by Pembrokeshire district health authority for NHS trust status.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales in what ways he is actively pursuing the interest of Pembrokeshire health authority in becoming a national health service trust.

Mr. Grist: My right hon. Friend is currently considering the "expression of interest", together with further information which has been recently received from the authority.

General Practitioners

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many general practitioner budget statu applications he has received in Wales; and if he will mak a statement.

Mr. Grist: Applications for recognition as fund-holding practice from 1 April 1991 were required t be made by 1 November. Eight applications were receive from practices in Wales although one of these has sinc withdrawn. The seven practices have been authorised t undertake the preparatory work. Formal offers of practic funds will be made early next year.

Hospitals

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many hospital beds have been lost in Wales since 1979.

Mr. Grist: Between the calendar year 1979 and the financial year 1989-90 the number of average daily available beds fell by 3,600. Over the same period the number of in-patients treated rose by 125,800—+36 per cent.—and the number of day cases rose by 54,800—+176 per cent.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many hospital wards are proposed for closure in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: The information held centrally relates only to proposed closures which are at present the subject of formal consultation. On this basis, and including those cases where consultation has ended but a final decision has yet to be made, 52 hospital wards are subject to closure proposals. Of these, 25 are linked to the planned development of a new district general hospital for the people of Taff-Ely and the Rhondda.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many hospitals have closed since 1980.

Mr. Grist: Since 1 January 1980 the number of hospitals that have closed, and are still closed, is 21. However, during the same period eight hospitals, including five district general hospitals, have opened.

Health Authorities

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many meetings he has had with the health authorities of Wales to discuss their financial difficulties; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: My right hon. Friend and I discussed the financial difficulties of Gwynedd health authority and its plans for resolving them with the chairman and general manager of the authority on 1 August. In addition, our officials have undertaken a series of annual review meetings with all authorities in recent months at which their financial positions have been reviewed. Health authorities have a statutory duty to contain expenditure within their notified cash resources, and we are content that they will do so.

Toxic Waste

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if, for each recommendation made by the Welsh Affairs Committee in its first report of Session 1989-90 on toxic waste disposal in Wales, he will state *(a)* the action taken by his Department so far and *(b)* the action proposed by his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: The Government's response to the recommendations was set out in Cm. 1147—my right hon. Friend's reply of 18 July refers to it. Provisions as indicated have been embodied in the Environmental Protection Act.

Community Charge Appeals

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will place in the Library the statutory community charge appeal documents authorised or prepared in the Welsh language and indicate the legislative base for the production of such documents.

Mr. David Hunt: I have not prescribed community charge appeal documents in either English or Welsh. Welsh language forms for use in connection with the community charge are prescribed in the Community Charges and Non-Domestic Rating (Demand Notices) (Wales) Regulations 1990, and in the Personal Community Charge (Students) Regulations 1989, copies of which are in the Library. In each case the powers relied upon include those provided by section 2(2) of the Welsh Language Act 1967.

M4

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the traffic counts for *(a)* cars and *(b)* lorries on the M4 from (i) Newhouse roundabout to the Coldra and (ii) from the Coldra to Tredegar park roundabout in each of the past 10 years.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Figures are provided for the sections from Newhouse to Magor and Caerleon to Malpas. Only total vehicle counts are available for the 10-year period as shown in the following table. Manual classified counts are carried out less frequently and the split between cars and all classes of goods vehicles is shown where available.

(i) Newhouse roundabout to the Coldra
Newhouse roundabout to Magor

Year	*Total vehicles*	*Cars*	*Lorries*
1981	24,800	—	—
1982	25,400	—	—
1983	25,800	—	—
1984	28,150	—	—
1985	30,000	21,700	7,700
1986	31,900	—	—
1987	35,500	—	—
1988	40,600	—	—
1989	44,000	—	—
1990	[1]44,600	—	—

[1] Estimated.

(ii) The Coldra to Tredegar park roundabout
Caerleon road junction to Malpas (Brynglas tunnels)

Year	*Total vehicles*	*Cars*	*Lorries*
1981	—	—	—
1982	50,200	—	—
1983	54,700	41,300	13,150
1984	59,100	—	—
1985	58,500	—	—
1986	—	—	—
1987	63,500	—	—
1988	68,700	—	—
1989	74,900	56,500	18,000
1990	[1]77,300	—	—

[1] Estimated.

Severn Estuary

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the dates of all unexpected tidal surges of more than a foot that have occurred in the Severn estuary during the past 10 years.

Mr. Grist: This information could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Drainage Authorities

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agricultu Fisheries and Food if he will list the grant earning ceil for each local or regional drainage district of the Natio Rivers Authority in each of the last five years at const 1989-90 prices.

Mr. Curry: The information is as follows:

Grant earning ceilings—adjusted using PWNR[1] to mid 1989-90 prices (mid 1990-91 estimated)

NRA Region/District	*1985-86 £ million*	*1986-87 £ million*	*1987-88 £ million*	*1988-89 £ million*	*1989-90 £ million*	*1990-91 £ million*
Anglian:						
Essex	2·03	2·87	5·04	5·42	3·20	2·33
Great Ouse	1·82	1·75	1·68	2·65	2·40	3·89
Lincs	4·20	4·54	4·39	4·68	6·10	7·29
Norfolk-Suffolk	1·61	2·13	3·49	3·49	3·65	3·99
Welland and Nene	2·38	2·10	1·68	1·50	1·32	1·36
Northumbrian	0·20	0·10	0·23	0·26	0·25	0·29
North West	3·05	1·58	1·49	1·65	1·40	2·14
Severn Trent	4·13	3·61	3·49	5·61	2·85	3·70
Southern:						
Hampshire	0·43	0·00	0·19	0·06	0·38	1·17
Isle of Wight	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·24
Kent	3·39	2·58	2·78	3·81	2·50	3·11
Sussex	1·50	2·95	[2]7·00	[2]4·50	1·12	2·04
South West	2·72	2·38	2·25	2·30	2·94	3·40
Thames	3·68	6·50	5·17	7·42	6·50	7·29
Wessex:						
Avon-Dorset	0·75	0·68	0·99	1·20	1·50	1·26
Bristol-Avon	0·82	0·38	0·31	0·15	0·30	0·29
Somerset	2·98	2·91	2·93	2·31	1·80	1·94
Yorkshire	4·85	4·24	5·04	5·55	5·08	5·19
TOTAL	40·54	41·32	48·15	52·57	43·28	50·95

[1] Public works output price index for non-roads compiled by the Department of the Environment.
[2] Includes special allocation for Seaford sea defence scheme.

Poultry

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish a table showing for each county of England and Wales the number of salmonella enteritidis PT4 outbreaks among poultry, the number of birds slaughtered and the compensation paid, in 1990 to date.

Mr. Maclean: Information in the form requested is not readily available. However a total of 49 flocks infected with salmonella enteritidis comprising 507,733 birds have so far been compulsorily slaughtered in 1990 at a cost in compensation of £551,509.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) under what circumstances antibiotic treatment of salmonella in poultry is now allowed; and if he will make a statement on the use of competitive exclusion products;

(2) whether he intends to amend his salmonella control regulations in respect of poultry; if he will introduce an antibiotic treatment alternative for laying flocks; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: Flocks of pullets—layer replacem —which are infected with salmonella enteritidis salmonella typhimurium are permitted in cer circumstances to be treated with antibiotics an competitive exclusion product as an alternative slaughter. These arrangements are being conducted trial basis at present to determine the effectiveness o treatment. The possibility of further adaptation of salmonella control policy is being kept under review

Pigs

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agricul Fisheries and Food when he received a copy of Humane Slaughter Association report on the culling o breeding stock; what response he will be making t recommendations; and if he proposes any conseq legislative change.

Mr. Maclean: A copy of this report has just received and we will be considering it carefully.

Unfit Meat

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many inquiries his Department is currently undertaking following the sale of unfit meat to butchers and supermarkets.

Mr. Maclean: Although MAFF veterinary officers can and do work closely with local authorities in this area, enforcement of legislation on unfit meat is the local authorities' responsibility and questions on numbers of inquiries must therefore be addressed to them. I am, nevertheless, aware that there is concern over allegations of illegal trade in unfit meat and we have instituted a full review of the existing controls to see if any improvements can be made, with particular attention to collection of casualty stock from farms.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has concerning the market value of beef cattle coming from farms where bovine spongiform encephalopathy has been confirmed.

Mr. Curry: None.

Mr. Hague: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his Department's latest forecast for the future spread of bovine spongiform encephalopathy; and if he will make a statement on the level of reporting of BSE cases.

Mr. Maclean: At present, about 350 suspect cases of BSE are being reported each week. The future course of the disease cannot be predicted precisely, but an assessment of the latest epidemiological evidence suggests that the number of cases will continue to rise until some time in 1992, after which, provided there is no direct cattle-to-cattle transmission, it will start to fall. The expected increase does not represent continued spread of the disease, but is a result of the exposure of cattle to the agent through the consumption of ruminant-based protein rations prior to the imposition of the feed ban in July 1988 and the long incubation period before clinical disease manifests itself.

Since BSE was made a notifiable disease in June 1988 the number of suspected cases arising each week has increased fairly steadily. Within this overall upward trend, a fairly consistent pattern of reporting has become apparent with numbers increasing in spring and autumn. Close surveillance at markets and abattoirs has not revealed any deliberate attempts to evade the legal requirement to report suspect cases of BSE.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the number of confirmed cases of BSE by county in the months *(a)* 17 July, *(b)* 17 August, *(c)* 17 September, *(d)* 17 October and *(e)* 17 November.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 21 November 1990]:* The number of cases confirmed on a monthly basis simply reflects the number of positive findings of BSE recorded as a result of laboratory investigation in the period concerned. As processing in the laboratory can take several weeks, these figures do not therefore accurately reflect developments in the number of new cases arising or reported.

The information for Great Britain is as follows:

County	*Month ending: 17 July 1990*	*17 August 1990*	*17 September 1990*	*17 October 1990*	*17 November 1990*
Avon	26	23	19	24	18
Bedfordshire	0	3	6	5	3
Berkshire	7	3	5	7	2
Borders	0	2	2	2	2
Buckinghamshire	17	15	6	10	8
Cambridgeshire	6	3	3	5	2
Central	2	1	1	2	1
Cheshire	26	37	30	23	23
Cleveland	3	3	2	1	1
Clwyd	12	20	17	11	10
Cornwall	53	72	83	71	79
Cumbria	27	24	20	16	13
Derbyshire	16	32	14	23	16
Devon	182	82	96	130	101
Dorset	101	86	105	93	90
Dumfries	5	5	6	9	3
Durham	8	3	5	4	3
Dyfed	67	40	40	49	41
Essex	5	7	7	3	3
Fife	2	4	2	2	3
Mid-Glamorgan	3	3	3	5	3
South Glamorgan	1	5	4	1	4
West Glamorgan	1	0	0	2	0
Gloucestershire	39	38	17	9	18
Grampian	8	5	6	6	7
Gwent	4	6	4	6	17
Gwynedd	3	3	3	3	2
Hampshire	36	43	33	41	42
Herefordshire and Worcestershire	20	22	25	16	22
Hertfordshire	9	3	7	81	8
Highland	1	2	1	3	3
Humberside	7	10	4	6	5
Isle of Wight	11	7	16	12	8
Kent	19	18	35	22	11

County	*17 July 1990*	*17 August 1990*	*Month ending: 17 September 1990*	*17 October 1990*	*17 Nov*
Lancashire	17	48	30	27	
Leicestershire	20	42	15	43	
Lincolnshire	4	8	11	4	
London	0	0	2	0	
Manchester	0	2	0	0	
Merseyside	0	2	1	2	
Norfolk	13	24	20	26	
Northamptonshire	4	8	14	13	
Northumberland	0	3	5	4	
Nottinghamshire	9	15	3	11	
Oxfordshire	7	16	17	14	
Powys	15	8	11	3	
Shropshire	28	15	30	16	
Somerset	83	105	105	56	
Staffordshire	39	15	21	30	
Strathclyde	8	8	6	7	
Suffolk	14	23	13	18	
Surrey	8	8	10	14	
East Sussex	14	10	13	14	
West Sussex	27	25	26	40	
Tayside	4	2	4	4	
Tyne and Wear	0	0	0	1	
West Midlands	0	0	1	0	
Warwickshire	14	12	9	10	
Wiltshire	64	86	57	66	
North Yorkshire	52	39	51	41	
South Yorkshire	6	6	5	5	
West Yorkshire	12	9	3	3	
TOTAL	1,189	1,169	1,110	1,095	

Fungicides

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if the fungicide malachite green has a product licence issued by his Department.

Mr. Maclean: Eight malachite green products have been licensed under the Medicines Act 1968 solely for treatment of aquarium fish.

Cocoa

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has about the pesticides, herbicides and fungicides used on cocoa imported to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Maclean: The results of monitoring for pesticide residues in cocoa undertaken by the food industry are made available to the Government's working party on pesticide residues. Residues of organochlorine pestic have been detected but at very low levels which presen risk to consumers and are declining. The Internati Cocoa Association is compiling a list of active ingredi used in producing countries to facilitate monitoring.

Intervention Produce

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Minister Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will give the t amount by weight and value of United Kingdom *(a)* b *(b)* dairy products, *(c)* lamb and *(d)* other produc intervention in 1988, 1989 and the latest available together with the total cost of storing this food.

Mr. Curry *[holding answer 16 November 1990]:* table shows actual stock levels and value as at September for the periods requested.

'000 tonnes/£ m

	30 September 1988		*30 September 1989 (provisional)*		*30 September 1990 (provisional)*	
	Tonnage	*Value*	*Tonnage*	*Value*	*Tonnage*	*Value*
Beef	32	49	9	12	42	32
Dairy products	50	76	8	11	27	15
Lamb[1]	—	—	—	—	—	—
Cereals	1,737	124	705	44	562	17

[1] There has been no public intervention storage of lamb.

The costs of intervention storage in the 12-month periods ending 30 September 1988, 1989 and 1990 are as follows:

	£ million
1988	40
1989	[1]21
1990	[1]16

[1] Provisional.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

European Parliamentary Conference

Mr. Page: To ask the Lord President of the Council if any changes have been made to the delegation attending the European parliamentary conference in Rome on 27 to 30 November.

Mr. MacGregor: The delegation will now include Mr. Patrick Nicholls. Dr. Norman Godman, Sir Jim Spicer and Lord Aldington will not attend.

Slot Machines

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Lord President of the Council what plans he has to ensure all slot machines in the Palace of Westminster are adapted to take the new 5p piece before the demonetisation of its predecessor on 31 December.

Mr. MacGregor: The coin-operated payphones, the cigarette machines, and the machines dispensing books of postage stamps accept only coins of a larger denomination than 5p. The food and drink vending machines in the Norman Shaw South building already accept both types of 5p coin. All other vending machines will be converted to accept the new 5p piece before the end of the year.

HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION

Refreshment Department

Mr. John Garrett: To ask the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission, if he will make available in the Library the Touche Ross report on the Refreshment Department.

Mr. Beith: The Greene Bellfield-Smith division of Touche Ross management consultants has recently completed its review of the management structure of the Refreshment Department, which was announced in paragraph 31 of the Commission's annual report for 1989-90—HC 572. A copy of the consultants' report will be placed in the Library of the House today. The Commission has not yet considered the report.

Ibbs Report

Mr. John Garrett: To ask the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission, when the Ibbs report on the management of House of Commons services will be published.

Mr. Beith: The report of the team led by Sir Robin Ibbs, on "House of Commons Services", will be published tomorrow morning as House of Commons paper 38.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Angola

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to provide substantial extra aid for the United Nations special relief programme for Angola to meet basic survival needs.

Mrs. Chalker: The details of the special relief programme for Angola are under urgent study, together with requests from several British non-governmental organisations which are co-operating with the United Nations. In advance of a response to the Secretary-General's appeal, we have already agreed to contribute towards the cost of a team of United Nations co-ordinators to assist with implementation of the programme.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Expo 92, Seville

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the estimated completion date for the British pavilion building at Expo 92 in Seville.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 26 November 1990]:* The estimated completion date for the British pavilion building at Expo 92 in Seville is August 1991.

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what British firms have offered or guaranteed sponsorship of the British pavilion at Expo 92 in Seville; how much money has been offered or guaranteed in each case; and whether any non-United Kingdom European Community companies have made similar offers or guarantees of sponsorship.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 26 November 1990]:* The table lists the British firms that have offered or guaranteed sponsorship of the British pavilion at Expo 92 and the value of each company's contribution, where we have permission to disclose it. Sponsorship is often a combination of cash and the supply of goods or services and in a number of instances is subject to the normal conventions of commercial confidentiality. No non-United Kingdom European Community company has made a similar offer or guarantee of sponsorship.

Company	*Value* £
Amalgamated Tanks International Ltd. Great Yarmouth Norfolk	—
BP Solar Ltd. Leatherhead Surrey	—
British Steel Rotherham South Yorkshire	2,000,000
Otis Elevator plc Kirkby Liverpool	—
Rolls Royce Motor Cars Ltd. Crewe Cheshire	—
Rotary International Ltd. County Antrim Northern Ireland	—
Royal Doulton Ltd. Stoke on Trent Staffordshire	300,000
Simplex Piling Ltd./BM Group Chippenham Wiltshire	—
Thorn Security Ltd. Feltham Middlesex	300,000
Tubeworkers Ltd. Claverdon Warwick	—

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on his Department's budget for Expo 92 at Seville, both for present and planned current and capital spending, by area.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 26 November 1990]:* My Department's budget for Expo 92 covering both current and capital expenditure is £25 million.

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the original estimated cost of the British pavilion planned for Expo 92; what is the current estimated cost, and what effect on costs any design changes have had.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 26 November 1990]:* The original estimated cost for the British pavilion was £14 million. Development of the design has not led to any change in that estimate.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Further Education Colleges

Mr. Stott: To ask the Secretary of State fo Ireland (1) what are the numbers of es promoted and transferred posts for each furthe college for the academic year 1990-91;

(2) what are the numbers of mainstre education posts for each further education co academic year 1990-91.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information requ follows:

Further Education Colleges	*1990-91 Academic year*		
	Number of approved full-time teaching posts	*Number of promoted posts*	*Number of transferred posts*
Belfast College of Technology	221	57	45
Belfast College of Business Studies	110	24	28
Rupert Stanley College	131	18	5
North-West College	135	27	15
Fermanagh College	65	6	—
Limavady	28	3	1
Omagh	63	4	—
Antrim	31	3	1
Ballymena	102	9	5
Newtownabbey	92	10	3
Ballymoney	24	2	—
Coleraine	50	3	—
Magherafelt	37	2	—
Larne	49	2	—
Northern Ireland Hotel and Catering College	23	2	—
Lisburn	79	9	6
Down	48	5	2
Newcastle	23	3	—
Castlereagh	75	7	5
North Down and Ards	111	13	8
Lurgan	52	3	—
Portadown	97	11	5
Armagh	67	5	—
Banbridge	27	1	—
East Tyrone	65	4	—
Newry/Kilkeel	81	9	5
Total	1,886	242	134

Mr. Stott: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what are the numbers of youth training programme-funded posts for each further education college for the academic years 1990-91 and 1989-90.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information requested is as follows:

Further Education College	*1989-90*	*1990-91*
Belfast College of Technology	49	31
Belfast College of Business Studies	16	11
Rupert Stanley College	87	80
North West College	37	34
Fermanagh	13	12
Limavady	22	16
Omagh	8	7
Antrim	11	9
Ballymena	16	12
Newtownabbey	28	19
Ballymoney	11	8
Coleraine	16	13
Magherafelt	8	
Larne	10	
Northern Ireland Hotel and Catering College	—	
Lisburn	25	
Down	23	
Newcastle	13	
Castlereagh	11	
North Down and Ards	29	
Lurgan	14	
Portadown	13	
Armagh	9	
Banbridge	10	
East Tyrone	11	
Newry/Kilkeel	21	

Lecturers

Mr. Stott: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) how many lecturers entering the service after 31 March 1988 have received additional increments for postgraduate qualifications;

(2) how many cases there are of lecturers entering the service after 31 March 1988, whereby the Department has exercised discretion with regard to salary placements under the 1988 further education teachers' salaries regulation.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information is not available in the form requested and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Stott: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many lecturers transferred from the youth training programme establishment to the mainstream further education establishment in each college at the end of September.

Dr. Mawhinney: The number of lecturers who transferred from the YTP establishment to the mainstream further education establishment in each college in September 1990 was as follows:

FE Colleges	*Transfers*
Belfast College of Technology	2
Belfast College of Business Studies	—
Rupert Stanley College	—
North West College	—
Fermanagh	—
Limavady	—
Omagh	1
Antrim	2
Ballymena	4
Newtownabbey	8
Ballymoney	3
Coleraine	—
Magherafelt	—
Larne	3
Northern Ireland Hotel and Catering College	—
Lisburn	—
Down	—
Newcastle	—
Castlereagh	—
North Down and Ards	—
Lurgan	—
Portadown	—
Armagh	1
Banbridge	2
East Tyrone	—
Newry/Kilkeel	3

Salary Placements

Mr. Stott: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement regarding details of any guidance issued by the Department to those involved in determining salary placements as to the circumstances under which discretion may be exercised.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Department of Education for Northern Ireland determines the salaries of teachers in Northern Ireland's grant-aided schools. Under the teachers' salaries regulations, incremental credit is awarded to a newly appointed teacher in respect of previous experience which the Department considers to be of value to him in the performance of his duty.

In exercising this discretion, the Department awards the credit for previous experience which has relevance to service as a teacher and is of equivalent professional standard to teaching.

HEALTH

Nuclear Casualties

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list all the hospitals in England and Wales that have been designated to accept nuclear-contaminated casualties; and if he will show in his answer those hospitals that have expressed an interest in national health service trust status.

Mr. Dorrell: The following hospitals have been designated for decontamination and treatment of contaminated casualties. Those which have applied to become national health service trusts from April 1991 are shown with an asterisk.

ENGLAND

East Anglia RHA
Addenbrook's Hospital
Norfolk and Norwich Hospital
The Ipswich Hospital

Mersey RHA
*Royal Liverpool Hospital

North East Thames RHA
*Southend General Hospital
Colchester General Hospital

Northern RHA
Cumberland Infirmary
West Cumberland Hospital
Furness General Hospital
Royal Victoria Infirmary
Middlesbrough General Hospital

North Western RHA
*Christie Hospital
Hope Hospital
*Manchester Royal Infirmary

North West Thames RHA
St. Mary's Hospital, Paddington
*Mount Vernon Hospital
Charing Cross Hospital
Hammersmith Hospital

Oxford RHA
John Radcliffe Hospital
Northampton General Hospital
Royal Berkshire Hospital

South East Thames RHA
*Guys Hospital
Kent and Canterbury Hospital
*Royal Sussex County Hospital

South Western RHA
*Bristol Radiotherapy Centre
*Cheltenham General Hospital
City Hospital, Truro
Royal Devon and Exeter Hospital
Gloucester Royal Hospital
Derriford General Hospital
*Musgrove Park Hospital
*Torbay Hospital, Torquay

South West Thames RHA
*Royal Surrey County Hospital
St. Georges Hospital, SW17
Royal Marsden, Fulham
Royal Marsden, Sutton
(The Hammersmith Hospital)
University College Hospital

Trent RHA
Lincoln County Hospital

Derbyshire Royal Infirmary
Leicester Royal Infirmary
Royal Hallamshire Hospital
University Hospital Nottingham

Wessex RHA
Southampton General Hospital
Queen Alexandra's Hospital, Portsmouth
Poole General Hospital

West Midlands RHA
The Royal Hospital, Wolverhampton
North Staffordshire Royal Infirmary
Selly Oak Hospital

Yorkshire RHA
*Leeds General Infirmary
*Bradford Royal Infirmary
Hull Royal Infirmary

WALES
Cardiff Royal Infirmary
Morriston Hospital
Ysbyty Gwynedd

Elderly People

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans his Department has to introduce a new code of practice for day and domiciliary care for elderly people.

Mr. Dorrell: There are no plans, at present, to publish such a code of practice. The need for central guidance will be considered as part of the development of the new community care arrangements.

Junior Doctors

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what financial resources will be made available to support the recommendations of the departmental working party on the hours worked by junior doctors.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I am currently chairing a ministerial group on junior doctors' hours. The group, representing all key parties, aims to reach broad agreement in principle on specific changes before the end of the year. Resource implications are being discussed in the context of that agreement.

Disabled People

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will list the local authority associations which have responded to his letter inviting costings estimates on sections 1 to 3 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986; and if he will list those which gave detailed costings;

(2) what procedures have local authority associations identified as incurring costs under sections 1 and 2 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986; and if he will list the estimated cost of each procedure;

(3) what procedures have local authority associations identified as incurring costs under section 3 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986; and if he will list the estimated cost of each procedure.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) whether advocates appointed under sections 1 and 2 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986 will receive payment for their service;

(2) if he will make it his policy that a doct
which states that an individual is unable t
own authorised representative under sectio
the Disabled Persons (Services, Cons
Representation) Act 1986 will be issued fre

Mr. Dorrell: The Association of
Authorities and the Association of County
both responded in detail to our invitation t
estimates for these sections. The asso
provisionally identified a number of area
extra costs, to an estimated annual total i
excess of £20 million. This estimate i
provision for payment from local autho
authorised representatives and to docto
medical opinions in some circumstances.
include any provision for increase in services
the extra demand which these sections wo
Our discussions with the local authority as
continuing.

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of St
if he will make a statement on his visit to Cl
services department to view the pilot impl
sections 1 to 3 of the Disabled Perso
Consultation and Representation) Act 198

Mr. Dorrell: My hon. Friend the Minis
met representatives of Cleveland social se
ment on 3 October to discuss the pilot
meeting was a useful source of inform
potential practical implications which impl
these sections would involve, and on the
overlap which could arise between these p
those to be introduced as a result of the Na
Service and Community Care Act 1990.
further consideration to these aspects in the
on-going discussions with the local authorit

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of Sta
what action he is taking in the
recommendations in the sixth and 11th r
Social Services Select Committee to implem
to 3 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Co
Representation) Act 1986 as soon as possib

Mr. Dorrell: The Government will reply
Committee's recommendations as soon as

Child Abuse

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State fo
has been the reported number of child abus
of the 32 London boroughs in each of the la

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The number of
of child abuse is not collected centrally.
collected centrally about the number of
young persons on child protection regis
number of names added to the register. Th
in "Children and Young Persons on Ch
Registers for the year ending 31 March" and
the Library. Data for the year ended 31 M
provisional. Data for the year ended 31
represent the results of a pilot survey.

Neurosciences (Transfer)

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secreta
Health if he will make a statement on th
between the increase in the cost of

neurosciences from the Brook hospital to the King's and Maudsley hospitals complex, the calculation involving the original cost of £27 million announced on 11 April 1989 by the then Minister of State and the present cost estimated at £50 million or more.

Mr. Dorrell: When the scheme was first submitted to the Department for approval in 1987 the cost at national average building rates was estimated to be £27 million. This figure subsisted throughout the approval in principle stage for comparative purposes.

In April 1989 the estimated costs were £42·5 million taking account of the rise in national building costs since 1987 and the additional costs of building in London.

The most recent estimate is that the total cost, taking full account of inflation since 1989 and the additional costs of building in London, has risen to £50·5 million.

Residential Care

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of pensioners in Durham county and the United Kingdom live in sheltered housing and residential care.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Information is not available in the form requested.

In the local authority of Durham at 31 March 1989, 2·6 per cent. of the population aged 65 and over were in residential care accommodation, compared with 3·1 per cent. in England as a whole.

Local authorities in England report annually the numbers of sheltered dwellings in their areas to the Department of the Environment. The latest figures, for April 1990, are available in the Library. I understand that there are no estimates of the proportion of pensioners who live in sheltered dwellings.

Residents aged 65 and over in residential accommodation in England at 31 March 1989

	Durham	*England*
Homes for Elderly and Younger Physically Handicapped People	2,458	232,336
All Homes	2,469	235,703
Population aged 65 and over	93,201	7,522,568

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many private registered homes, voluntary registered homes, and local authority homes for the elderly there were in *(a)* Durham county and *(b)* the United Kingdom in 1980, 1985 and for the latest available year; how many places these provided and how many residents there were in each of these years.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The information available is given in the table. Data refer to homes catering primarily for people who are elderly or younger people who are physically handicapped. Data for these two groups were not collected separately for all of the years requested.

Information relating to Scotland is a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and information for Northern Ireland and Wales is a matter for my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Northern Ireland and for Wales.

Number of homes, places and residents in residential homes primarily for elderly people and younger people who are physically handicapped, by sector

	Homes			*Places*			*Residents*		
	Local authority	*Voluntary*	*Private*	*Local authority*	*Voluntary*	*Private*	*Local authority*	*Voluntary*	*Private*
Durham									
1980	43	2	5	1,745	33	113	1,728	30	102
1985	44	4	62	1,842	141	217	1,766	114	196
1989	44	6	108	1,829	161	1,026	1,585	144	905
England									
1980	2,638	1,107	2,278	114,103	34,957	35,764	107,852	30,665	30,495
1985	2,672	1,108	5,200	116,080	37,466	80,041	105,864	31,423	69,000
1989	2,602	1,068	8,303	109,194	34,166	135,369	98,269	30,663	114,106

Influenza Vaccine

Dame Jill Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he is taking to ensure that general medical practitioners are aware that extra influenza vaccine has been made available to fulfil all needs of at risk patients.

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether his Department has obtained enough influenza vaccine to meet the demand from general practitioners; and what arrangements are being made to publicise the availability of this vaccine.

Mr. Dorrell: A number of steps have been taken to ensure an adequate supply of influenza vaccine. Over 3,600,000 doses of vaccine were made available this autumn. The Department has also arranged for the manufacture of a further 1 million doses which will be available from this week, providing a total supply of 45 per cent. more than last year.

The Department wrote to all family health services Authority general managers on 22 November informing them of the arrangements made to provide the further 1 million doses, a copy of which is available in the Library.

Mentally Handicapped People

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give details of the scheme to provide facilities for the relocation of mentally handicapped people in the community in the Normanton constituency, described in the *Official Report*, 16 October, column 1039.

Mr. Dorrell: The scheme in question is the Wakefield and Pontefract case management scheme. I suggest the hon. Member contacts Sir Bryan Askew, the chairman of the Yorkshire regional health authority, for further details.

Smoked Salmon

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he is taking to protect the trade in postal orders for smoked salmon which may be affected by the new regulations in the food Bill.

Mr. Dorrell: The Food Hygiene (Amendment) Regulations 1990 will require certain foods to be kept chilled unless the processing of the food or the method of packaging can be shown to prevent the growth of pathogenic micro-organisms at ambient temperature. Smoked fish is one of the relevant foods. Research is taking place to see how the industry can best adapt to the new regulations.

Sheep Dips

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research is currently being undertaken into the effect on human health of those exposed to organo-phosphorus sheep dips.

Mr. Forth: I have been asked to reply.

The Health and Safety Executive's south-west region is conducting a regional project on the risk from organo-phosphorus sheep dip. The study aims to develop information about the uptake of organo-phosphorus and possibly other solvents and phenols by operators and bystanders in the sheep-dipping season and relate this information to symptoms reported in the farming community.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Income Support

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the current level of income support benefits received by *(a)* a single householder aged under 25 years, *(b)* a single householder with disabilities aged under 25 years, *(c)* a pensioner couple, *(d)* a pensioner couple with disabilities and *(e)* an unemployed man with dependent wife and two children aged five and 11 years; and in each case what would they have received if the pre-April 1988 system of supplementary benefits were still operating.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The question is not sufficiently specific concerning the circumstances of each beneficiary to enable an assessment to be made of what benefit they might have been entitled to under the old scheme. In addition, it would not be possible to calculate the likely entitlement of these individuals today, had the old scheme stayed in place, since it is not possible to say how the scheme would have evolved in response to changing circumstances.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of *(a)* the effect on the future number of income support claimants of the proposal to reduce the definition of full-time work from 24 hours to 16 hours and *(b)* the number of existing claimants who would lose entitlement if there were no transitional protection; and, in each case, if he will subdivide the figures into the childless, two-parent families and one-parent families.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Many families who are working part time will be better off as a result of the reduction in the remunerative work from 24 hours to 1 they will become entitled to family cred who are currently claiming income supp encouraged to take up employment, and t from income support to family credit. W protection for those claimants who need change.

The information requested is in the ta

	Number of claimants transferring from income support to family credit at point of change
Childless	nil
Couples with children	10,000
Lone parents	25,000

Source: Modelled using data drawn from the Expenditure Surveys.
Note: The figures do not allow for the effects of Disability Working Allowance.

PRIME MINISTER

European Energy Charte

Mr. Wray: To ask the Prime Minis Majesty's Government will actively supp of President Delors and the Netherlands energy charter for the whole of Europe.

The Prime Minister: We have development of this initiative to date and to do so in the future.

Cambodia

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Prime Mir letters, cards, messages and phone calls concerning Cambodia since 8 October.

The Prime Minister: I have recei representations concerning Cambodia.

Press Secretary

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Prime M authority her press secretary issued any media in regard to her leadership ca Conservative and Unionist party.

The Prime Minister: My press secretar my interests as Prime Minister.

EDUCATION AND SCIE

Medical Research Coun

16. **Mr. Strang:** To ask the Secret Education and Science how much fu provided for the Medical Research Cou year.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Grant in aid to financial year will total £185·7 million.

Grammar Schools

17. **Mr. Roger King:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many grammar schools there presently are in England and Wales.

Mr. Fallon: In January 1989 there were 150 grammar schools in the maintained sector in England. The provisional estimate for January 1990 is the same. Welsh schools are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Education Administration Budgets

18. **Mr. Jack:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he is taking to ensure that children's education is not adversely affected by the size of a local authority's budget for education administration.

Mr. Fallon: My right hon. and learned Friend and I have made it clear that we are determined that LEAs should reduce the proportion of resources which they hold back for spending on central bureaucracies and other central services. We shall be publishing a draft circular next month which will consult on proposals to that end.

Bradford CTC

19. **Mr. Cryer** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the total amount of grant aid in 1989 and 1990 for the city technology college in Bradford.

Mr. Eggar: Total grant aid to the Bradford CTC was £2·9 million in the 1989-90 financial year for management and capital costs. So far this financial year, costs, including running costs, total £4 million.

Education Policies

20. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received as to the impact of the Government's policies for education on the north and north-west of England.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend receives such representations from time to time.

Student Loans Company

21. **Mrs. Margaret Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what has been the total cost to date of establishing in Glasgow the headquarters of the Student Loans Company.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The Student Loans Company opened for business early in September. The total costs of establishing the student loans scheme to 31 August 1990 were £9·3 million, exclusive of VAT.

Stratford School, Newham

22. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science on what grounds he approved the local management of schools application on behalf of Stratford school, Newham.

Mr. Eggar: I presume that the hon. Member means "grant-maintained status" and not "local management of schools". My right hon. Friend the then Secretary of State approved grant-maintained status for Stratford school because he judged that it was capable of providing cost-effectively for pupils aged 11 to 18, and that it was capable of maintaining and improving its performance under new management.

Education Expenditure (London)

23. **Mr. Fraser:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the current annual expenditure per child at *(a)* Sylvan city technology college and *(b)* local authority secondary schools in London.

Mr. Fallon: Funding for Sylvan city technology college has not yet been finalised, but the provisional annual per capita grant (APG) for 1990-91 is some £2,845 per pupil. The annual school-based expenditure at local authority secondary schools in London in 1988-89, the latest year for which this information is available, was some £2,095 per pupil.

It should be noted that these figures are not comparable in coverage. The local authority figure excludes central local education authority spending on such items as home to school transport and central administration; Sylvan's APG has to cover such items, and also includes an element to cover diseconomies of scale in the early years of operation. Sylvan CTC is also eligible for earmarked annual grant for particular purposes, in addition to its APG but not on a per capita basis.

Teacher Training

24. **Mr. Harry Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many representations he has received in the current year concerning the funding of in-service teacher training.

Mr. Fallon: The Department receives many letters and other representations about in-service teacher training generally. This year we have had around 40 letters which have raised funding issues. These are in addition to the bids which LEAs have submitted for support for training under next year's grants for education support and training programme.

Nursery Education

25. **Mr. Steinberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has to provide access to nursery education for children in every local education authority.

Mr. Eggar: The Government believe in a diversity of provision for the under-fives. Maintained nursery schools and classes are an important element within this diversity and the numbers of pupils attending them have increased by over 40 per cent. during the period of the present Government.

Higher Education

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he next proposes to meet the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals to discuss the expansion of higher education in the period 1990 to 2000.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I have already met representatives of the CVCP to discuss the recent public expenditure settlement and its provision for the further expansion of higher education. I expect to meet them again soon.

Teachers

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many students qualified to be teachers left the university of Wales and the teacher training colleges of Wales at the end of each academic year since 1984-85; how many qualified in each of the main subjects; and how many were qualified to teach their subject through the medium of Welsh.

Mr. Fallon: The number of students who left the university of Wales qualified to be teachers at the end of each academic year since 1984-85 is shown in the table. Information is not held centrally on the subjects in which they qualified and how many were qualified to teach through the medium of Welsh.

The University of Wales Students qualifying as teachers

Academic year	*Students qualifying*
1984-85	573
1985-86	511
1986-87	493
1987-88	525
1988-89	501

The number of students who left the teacher training colleges of Wales since academic year 1984-85 qualified as teachers, and the subjects in which they qualified, are shown in the tables. Information is not held centrally on how many were qualified to teach through the medium of Welsh.

Teacher Training Colleges of Wales Students qualifying as Teachers

Main subjects	*Students 1984-85*
Primary School	287
Middle School	16
Mathematics	27
Chemistry	—
Physics	—
Biological Sciences	—
Combined Sciences	24
Welsh	—
English	2
Other languages	—
History	—
Geography	—
Religious Education	2
Craft, design and technology	32
Commercial and Business Studies	25
Art/art and light Craft	23
Home economics/needlework	3
Music	5
Physical Education	37
Other	7
TOTAL	490

Teacher Training Colleges of Wales Students qualifying as Teachers

Main subjects	*Students 1985-86*
Art or Art and Craft	33
Biological Sciences	8
Commercial Studies	8
Craft and Design Technology	38
Drama	5
Education	132
English	38
Environmental Science	4
Geography	10
History	14
Home Economics	2
Mathematics	25
Modern Languages	1
Music	15
Needlecraft	2
Physical Education	10
Religious Education Studies	4
Science	12
Welsh	24
Mathematics and Physics	6
Combination of Arts Subjects	18
Interdisciplinary Studies	28
Other Subjects	55
Humanities	16
Scientific Studies	5
Not known	24
Total	537

Teacher training colleges of Wales students qualifying as Teachers

Main subjects	*Students 1986-87*
Art or Art and Craft	32
Biological Sciences	6
Commercial Studies	12
Craft and Design Technology	45
Drama	11
Education	114
English	42
Environmental Science	3
Geography	22
History	16
Mathematics	24
Music	26
Needlecraft	4
Physical Education	19
Primary School Curriculum	56
Religious Education Studies	24
Science	16
Welsh	22
Combination of Arts Subjects	30
Interdisciplinary Studies	55
Other Subjects	70
Humanities	21
Scientific Studies	7
Not Known	1
Total	678

Teacher Training Colleges of Wales Students qualifying as Teachers

Main Subjects	*Students 1987-88*
Art or Art and Craft	49
Commercial Studies	27
Craft and Design Technology	32
Drama	8
Education	110
English	34
Environmental Science	2
General Science	10
Geography	21
History	19
Mathematics	19
Music	26
Needlecraft	1
Physical Education	30

Main Subjects	Students 1987-88
Primary School Curriculum	44
Religious Education Studies	21
Science	32
Welsh	16
Combination of Arts Subjects	43
Interdisciplinary Studies	47
Other Subjects	55
Humanities	14
Scientific Studies	7
Total	667

Teacher Training Colleges of Wales
Students qualifying as Teachers

Main Subjects	Students 1988-89
Environmental Science and other Physical Science	16
Mathematics	30
Geography	13
Business and Management Studies	30
English	35
Celtic Languages	19
History	28
Theology and Religious Studies	16
Design Studies	38
Music	29
Drama	21
Art and Design (Other)	50
Physical Education	29
Academic Studies in Education	129
Education for Those with Special Needs	19
Other Topics in Education	70
Combined or General Science	28
Combined or General Arts	13
Other Combined or General Courses	64
Total	677

Educational Psychologists

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what figures he has on the total numbers of children referred by their school to see educational psychologists and of those currently waiting to do so.

Mr. Alan Howarth: This information is not collected centrally.

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps are being taken to reduce the waiting lists for the school psychological service for pupils in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The management of its psychology service is a matter for the individual local education authority. The Department provides specific funds to local education authorities in England, under the grants for education support and training, for the training of educational psychologists. In the current year £2·8 million was made available for this purpose.

Education establishments in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland are the responsibility of the respective Secretaries of State.

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will take steps to ensure that the shortfall in the take-up of grants for the initial training of educational psychologists goes to training prospective educational psychologists.

Mr. Alan Howarth: In the current year, the grant for educational psychologists under the local education authority training grants scheme was sufficient to meet all local education authorities' needs. The small amount of grant not taken up by LEAs this year has been transferred to meet urgent needs in other national priority areas in the special education field.

Access Funds

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what are the rules governing the eligibility of a student to apply for money from access funds.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The following students in publicly funded institutions are eligible to apply to their institutions:

undergraduates: all full-time and sandwich home students in higher education at undergraduate level;
postgraduates: all full-time home students in higher education studying at levels above first degree; and
students in further education: all full-time and sandwich home students in further education aged 19 and over.

It is for each individual institution to draw up criteria for determining which applicants should receive support.

Disabled Students

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many schools of higher education have wheelchair access; and how many are currently making the transition.

Mr. Alan Howarth: As autonomous bodies, higher education institutions are responsible for determining what provision to make to meet the needs of students with disabilities. This is not monitored centrally.

LEA Capital Funds

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what arrangements he makes for ensuring that sufficient capital funds are available to areas of known rapid population expansion for timely planning and construction of schools without prejudice to current and future interest of existing and future populations of the relevant local education authority.

Mr. Fallon: It is for local education authorities to ensure that they provide sufficient school places. In distributing annual capital guidelines to authorities, my right hon. and learned Friend gives priority, after allowing for existing commitments, to their plans for providing new school places in areas of population growth. Priority is then given to plans to remove surplus capacity, to new building projects at colleges of further education and, as resources allow, to programmes to replace or refurbish existing school premises.

Parental Choice

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what action he is taking to increase parental choice of schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fallon: The Government have already taken measures in the Education Reform Act 1988 to remove the artificial restrictions placed by some local education authorities on the number of pupils admitted to particular

schools, thus increasing parents' chances of getting a place for their child at the school of their choice. The relevant provisions of the Act were brought into force for secondary schools in August this year. My right hon. and learned Friend is currently considering the timing of their introduction in the primary sector. The Government have also ensured that parents have more information about schools through prospectuses and annual reports. Parental choice is being further extended through the creation of grant-maintained schools and city technology colleges.

Physical Education

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he intends to set up a survey of the state of school sport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The terms of reference of the national curriculum working group on physical education require the group to make recommendations on attainment targets and programmes of study for PE, including competitive sport. The Government are also currently undertaking a review of their policies and priorities for sport, which will include sport in schools. However, my right hon. and learned Friend has no plans to undertake a separate survey on the state of school sport.

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he intends to set up a register on the current availability of school playing fields; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fallon: No. The provision of school playing fields is a mattter for local education authorities and others directly responsible for schools.

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information his Department has about the current provision of swimming lessons in schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Evidence on the provision of swimming instruction in schools is provided through the visits and reports of Her Majesty's inspectorate. The Government recognise the value of young people being taught to swim as part of a programme of physical education.

Religious Education

Sir Peter Emery: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how much time he estimates should be spent under the national curriculum on the teaching of religious education; and what proportion of that should be spent on the study of the Christian faith.

Mr. Eggar: Religious education must be included alongside the national curriculum in the basic curriculum of all maintained schools. In county schools, the content of RE must be in accordance with a locally agreed syllabus drawn up by a conference convened by the local education authority. My right hon. and learned Friend has no power to prescribe how much time should be spent on individual subjects, but he has made clear his view that in drawing up an agreed syllabus the conference should assume that a reasonable time will be available for the study of RE.

Pensions Branch, Darlington

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State fo Education and Science what plans he has for the future o the Department of Education and Science pensions branc in Darlington; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Howarth: We are currently considerin whether the pensions branch should be identified as candidate for agency status, in the light of a feasibilit study conducted earlier this year.

Soil and Rock Formation

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State fo Education and Science whether he has asked the Britis Geological Survey to carry out a survey of soil and roc formation in England and Wales; and if he will make statement.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Systematic geological surveys i Great Britain are one of the main tasks of the Britis Geological Survey, for which it is funded mainly throug the science vote. The soil survey of England and Wales wa transferred in July 1987 from the Agricultural and Foo Research Council to the Cranfield institute of technolog to form part of the soil survey and land use research centr funded by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries an Food.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for Educatio and Science how many primary schools have expresse interest to his Department in opting out.

Mr. Eggar: We have received large numbers of inquirie about becoming grant-maintained from primary school Since the announcement on 10 October that all primar schools would be able to apply for GM status, more tha 40,000 copies of our explanatory leaflet for parents hav been requested by schools. The majority of these reques have come from primary schools.

Teaching Unions

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for Educatio and Science when he intends to meet the teaching unio to discuss educational policy; and if he will make statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I and my hon. Friends expect t have meetings from time to time with the teaching unio on a range of educational policy matters.

DEFENCE

Gulf Forces

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defenc what arrangements have been made to provide servic personnel with the ability to telephone the Unite Kingdom and Germany.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We are giving urgent considera tion, in consultation with British Telecom, Mercury an Cable and Wireless, to the establishment of a welfar telephone link between the Gulf and the United Kingdo and Germany. A trial system is currently being tested.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what arrangements have been made to provide the families of service personnel in the Gulf region with facilities to visit the area.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There are no plans to introduce such arrangements.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the intended length of tours of duty for service personnel in the Gulf region.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is intended that service personnel now being deployed to the Gulf will serve a tour of duty of about six months. The precise duration will depend on a number of factors and will be governed by operational considerations.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether there are any plans for Combined Services Entertainment to stage any productions in the Gulf region.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Yes.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the military equipment sent to the Gulf region will be included within the forthcoming treaty on conventional forces in Europe.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: United Kingdom equipment deployed to the Gulf will continue to be treated for the purposes of the CFE treaty as if it remained within that treaty's area of application, and has been included within the equipment totals declared for the purposes of that treaty.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps have been taken to establish libraries for service personnel in the Gulf region.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Regular supplies of paperback books are sent to the Gulf. We are keeping under review the requirement to establish formal libraries.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether there are any plans for the Services Sound and Vision Corporation to set up *(a)* cinemas or *(b)* video libraries in the Gulf region.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Services Sound and Vision Corporation plans to have two mobile cinemas operating in the area early next month. Several hundred video cassettes have already been sent to the Gulf, together with televisions and video recorders.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the Services Sound and Vision Corporation or the British Forces Broadcasting Service intend to broadcast any material in the Gulf region.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Services Sound and Vision Corporation is already making regular short-wave broadcasts to the Gulf. As I announced yesterday, we have decided to expand the broadcasting facilities in the area by providing VHF facilities in Saudi Arabia to broadcast British Forces Broadcasting Service programmes. This will provide coverage in the area of eastern Saudi Arabia from December. In addition, trials are to be undertaken this month of broadcasting further BFBS programmes using short-wave transmissions from Cyprus.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether there are sufficient supplies of buttons for the desert uniforms for British soldiers stationed in the Gulf.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Yes. There was a temporary shortage of one size of button in the initial stages of the production of desert combat clothing, but this problem has now been overcome.

Racial Discrimination

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what further steps he is taking, following the judgment in the case of Stephen Anderson, to prevent racial discrimination in the armed services.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The services are fully integrated non-discriminatory organisations and discrimination is not tolerated. Any complaint of racial discrimination will be thoroughly investigated and if substantiated disciplinary action will be taken against those found to have been involved. The Anderson judgment relates not to this policy but to the procedures followed by the Army Board in dealing with claims of racial discrimination brought under the Race Relations Act 1976. As soon as the final, approved, judgment has been received the Ministry of Defence will consider in detail what changes may be necessary to service procedures to conform with the judgment.

The Gulf (Floating Hospital)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the cost of the floating hospital in the Gulf developed from the Royal Fleet Auxiliary Argus.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The costs of equipping the Royal Fleet Auxiliary Argus for her role as a primary casualty receiving ship amounted to £2·5 million.

Desert Camouflage

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when British troops in the desert will be kitted out in desert camouflage or khaki drill; and what use has been made of British Army studies of desert kit and camouflage.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Sufficient desert combat clothing has been delivered to the Gulf for an initial issue to the troops already deployed there, and further quantities are being purchased to meet future requirements. As a result of recent Ministry of Defence studies the Army's new desert clothing incorporates a number of improvements, including a change in the design of the trousers, and the use of new materials with a special disruptive camouflage pattern for desert use.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what studies he has done of the operational effectiveness of the SA80 assault rifle in desert camouflage conditions.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The SA80 individual weapon has proven on a number of hot weather trials conducted over the last two years that it performs well in severe desert conditions. Camouflage requirements depend on local terrain, and any additional provision is determined by commanders in the field.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the new desert uniforms being supplied to British troops stationed in the Gulf are of the same pattern as uniforms exported in the last 10 years.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The desert combat clothing being supplied to the British forces in the Gulf is of a new design based on improvements in tropical uniforms. These improvements include a change in the design of the trousers and the use of new materials, incorporating a special disruptive camouflage pattern for desert use.

Air Defence System

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the improved United Kingdom air defence ground environment command and control system is due to come into operational service; what system is in operation in the meantime; and if he will make a statement as to how the ICCS will operate.

Mr. Alan Clark: The integrated command and control system (ICCS) of the improved United Kingdom air defence ground environment (IUKADGE) is a computer system which will gather basic data relating to the air defence of the United Kingdom from a variety of sources (ground radars, early warning aircraft, fighters and ships, and NATO sources); process this information to maintain recognised air and sea pictures (RASP) and resource data catalogue (RDC) information files; provide assistance to operators to enable them to recognise hostile aircraft and to optimise the use of air defence assets to respond to such threats; and provide necessary supporting communications. Operating centres will be able to contribute to a common database and to assume other sites' tasks in the event of damage or loss. The quality, quantity and consistency of management information will be enhanced, so improving tactical decision making and resource management, as compared with the existing UKADGE system. In the latter, sites are linked only by a simple datalink and communications systems; command and control is exercised on a mixture of manual and semi-automatic systems; and the amount of shared data is limited.

The ICCS programme has suffered from substantial delays. We now expect it to be in full operational service by the mid-1990s.

Cruise Missile

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what problems have been encountered in the development of the new air-launched cruise missile; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I assume that the hon. Member is referring to the replacement system for our WE177 free-fall nuclear bomb. We are currently considering both French and United States options, but no decision has yet been taken. Accordingly the question of development does not yet arise.

Hunting

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the hunts that have licences allowing them access to hunt on land held by his Department; and if he will list which land each licence covers.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The hunts that have licences allowing them to hunt on Ministry of Defence land and the areas covered by the licences are as follows:

Hunt and Area Used

The Hampshire Hunt—Longmoor
Mr. Goschen's Hounds—Longmoor, Hankley, Camberley and Ash
The Chiddingfold, Leconfield and Cowdray Hounds—Longmoor
The Windsor Forest Blood Hounds—Camberley
The Royal Artillery Hunt—Salisbury Plain West
The South and West Wilts Hunt—Salisbury Plain West
The Avondale Hunt—Salisbury Plain West
The Sennybridge Hunt—Sennybridge
The Irfon and Tywi Hunt—Sennybridge
The Brecon Hunt—Sennybridge
The Glyn Celyn Beagles—Sennybridge
The Essex and Suffolk Hunt—Colchester
The Cambridgeshire Hunt—Brampton Wood
The Bedale Hunt—Ripon Parks and Catterick
The West of Yore Hunt—Ripon Parks and Catterick
The Zetland Hunt—Feldom and Catterick
The Wensleydale Foxhounds—Stainton and Bellerby
The Catterick Beagles—Feldom and Catterick
The Border Hunt—Otterburn
The Tynedale Hunt—Ouston

Computers

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the CM (CIPMIS) computer; what is its function; who has access to it; and where it is located.

Mr. Alan Clark: The CIPMIS system contains computerised basic personnel records of all non-industrial civil servants in the Ministry of Defence. It is used to help personnel management to make decisions on the posting and promotion of individual members of staff. Information in respect of individuals is available to the relevant personnel managers; aggregated information is available more generally within the Department. The system is located at the computer bureau at Devizes and is controlled by officials based in Bath.

RAF Macrihanish

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the purpose of the construction works in the contract let to Amey Construction at RAF Macrihanish.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The contract let to Amey Construction at RAF Macrihanish is to construct dispersed aircraft parking platforms and associated connecting taxitrack for use by SACLANT assigned maritime patrol aircraft.

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the estimated cost of the construction work being undertaken at RAF Macrihanish by Amey Construction; and whether the total cost is being met out of his Ministry's budget.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The details of the contract for work being undertaken at RAF Macrihanish by Amey Construction are "Contracts in Confidence" and, as such, cannot be released. However, the cost is being met entirely from NATO infrastructure funds; the Ministry of Defence will pay the VAT element only.

Iraq (Uranium)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he possesses on current uranium mining in Iraq and on future Iraqi potential to convert natural uranium yellowcake to weapons grade material.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Iraq is a signatory to the non-proliferation treaty and has concluded a full-scope safeguards agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) under which its nuclear facilities must be regularly inspected. Iraq extracts uranium as a by-product of the processing of phosphates to make fertilisers at Al Qaim close to the border with Syria. Since uranium ore (yellowcake) is not subject to safeguards inspections we are unable to state the total amount produced. No additional deposits of uranium ore have been identified within the country.

If Iraq wishes to produce enriched uranium it would require a facility to convert the yellowcake into a form suitable for enrichment and also an enrichment plant. We have no evidence of the existence of such facilities and, should it build them, Iraq would be obliged to declare them for safeguards inspections under its agreement with the IAEA.

Intermediate Nuclear Forces Treaty

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has had any discussions with his United States counterpart concerning the deployment in the United Kingdom and other European NATO countries of new B61-4/10 nuclear warheads made from modified W85 warheads withdrawn from Pershing II missiles under the treaty of Washington on intermediate nuclear forces.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Details of discussions between Her Majesty's Government and the United States Government are confidential.

EMPLOYMENT

Training and Enterprise Councils

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many of the members of training and enterprise councils represent *(a)* employers, *(b)* trades unions and *(c)* others; if he will classify in broad terms the categories from which members under *(c)* are drawn; what information is held on the political affiliation of members of training and enterprise councils; and whether any members are nominated by political groupings.

Mr. Jackson: The information requested on board members is set out in the table and refers to the 41 operational training and enterprise councils. The role of TECs is to engage employers more fully in the training process. It is not their function to represent sectional interests in their local community. Board members are, therefore, appointed as individuals in their own right.

The number of board members drawn from the various sectors is as follows:

(a) Employers—378
(b) Trades Unions—29
(c) Other—137

The "other" category can be broken down into:

Local authority—50
Education—59
Voluntary organisation—20
Employer association—8

Information is not kept on the political affiliation of TEC members. Board members are not drawn from political groupings.

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how much money training and enterprise councils have spent in total on outside consultants.

Mr. Jackson: The information is not available.

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment which consultancies have been employed by training and enterprise councils; and how much money each has received in fees for developing corporate or strategic plans.

Mr. Jackson: Training and enterprise councils are independent private companies. The consultants employed by them and the fees paid are a matter for individual TECs.

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many *(a)* chief executives of training and enterprise councils and *(b)* other staff, excluding outside employees, have chosen (i) to resign civil service status and (ii) to retain such status.

Mr. Jackson: The information requested is set out in the table and refers to the 41 operational training and enterprise councils.

		Number
(a) (i)	Chief Executives who have resigned Civil Service status	4
(ii)	Chief Executives who have retained Civil Service status	23
(b) (i)	Other staff who have resigned Civil Service status	—
(ii)	Other staff who have retained Civil Service status	2,156

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what allocation of resources has been made to the training and enterprise councils towards the training of the lower ability range of potential trainees.

Mr. Jackson: Budgets for training and enterprise councils are negotiated with individual TECs, based on proposals set out in their corporate and business plans. These plans set out how the needs of trainees of all ability levels including those from the lower ability range are to be addressed.

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many of the training and enterprise council chief executives designated or appointed have been recruited from *(a)* outside the civil service and *(b)* outside the Training Agency.

Mr. Jackson: Sixty-four of the 82 training and enterprise councils have appointed or designated a chief executive to date. Of these, 25 were recruited from outside both the civil service and the Department of Employment.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give figures for unemployment in the east midlands region in 1985 and 1990.

Mr. Jackson: The level of unemployment, seasonally adjusted, in the east midlands, was 102,900 or 5·3 per cent. in October 1990 compared with 185,400 or 9·8 per cent. in October 1985.

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the level of unemployment in Amber Valley in 1985 and 1990.

Mr. Jackson: In October 1990 the numbers of unemployed claimants, not seasonally adjusted, in the Amber Valley parliamentary constituency were 1,958. This compares with 4,057 in October 1985 and represents a fall of 51·7 per cent.

Technical and Vocational Education Initiative

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he expects local education authorities to be told their financial allocations for 1991-92 for the technical and vocational education initiative; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: My officials are now confirming the TVEI finances available in 1991-92 with each local education authority. The Government are fully committed to the TVEI. A total of £900 million is available to extend the initiative to all 14 to 18-year-olds in maintained schools and colleges. One hundred and three education authorities are now in the extension phase of the TVEI. I am very pleased with the progress that has been made.

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will set out, in 1989 prices, the level of funding for the technical and vocational education initiative for 1989-90, 1990-91, and 1991-92.

Mr. Jackson: Funding levels, in cash prices, for the years requested are as follows:

	£ million
1989-90	129·3 (actual expenditure)
1990-91	134·1 (estimates provision)
1991-92	141·6 (PES allocation)

The figures are not available in 1989 prices.

Toxic Chemicals (Storage)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what studies have been conducted by his Department, or consultants to his Department, on improving the safety of storage of toxic or corrosive chemicals at large industrial sites; and what studies have been conducted on the design of bunds associated with chemical containment.

Mr. Forth: In addition to the high standards of legislative control which already exist for vessels storing hazardous chemicals, the Health and Safety Executive is encouraging an improvement in the mitigatory strategies adopted by occupiers to limit the consequences of vessel failure. The HSE is funding a research and development programme into the design and performance of bunds. A first study entitled "The Design of Bunds" was published in March and a further study is nearing completion.

Youth Training

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will produce a table to show the changes in the level of YOP/YTS allowance since April 1978, giving *(a)* the date of the change, *(b)* the level of the allowance and *(c)* the value of the allowance at Nov 1990 prices; and what the allowance would now be if kept pace with average earnings since April 1978.

Mr. Jackson: The table shows the changes i minimum allowances paid to trainees on the opportunities programme/youth training scheme 1978, expressed in cash terms and at October 1990 the latest month for which information is available

If the minimum YT allowance had increased average earnings since April 1978, it would have £62·35 in September 1990, the latest month for average earnings information is available.

Figures quoted are minimum levels. A consid number of YT trainees receive higher allowances or

Date of change	*Cash value*	[1] *At Octob*
	£	
Lower level		
April 1978	19·50	
November 1978	20·55	
November 1979	23·50	
January 1982	25·00	
September 1984	26·25	
September 1985	27·30	
April 1987	28·50	
July 1988	29·50	
Higher level		
April 1986	35·00	

[1] Estimated using the movement in the Retail Prices Inde

European Social Fund

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of Sta Employment when he will be in a position to pay to voluntary organisations for the European socia programme starting in January.

Mr. Forth: Time scales and procedures for the European social fund programmes will be consultation with the various committees estab under the new ESF arrangements. These consult have begun. Payments will be made to organisation their applications have been approved, and the mon been received from the European Commission.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of Sta Employment if he will make a statement on the imp the delays in the administration of European funding for voluntary sector applications.

Mr. Forth: I appreciate that many vol organisations may be experiencing financial difficul a result of delays in implementing the reformed Eu social fund this year. A major cause of this delay w the operational programmes submitted to Commission, in line with the new regulations, we approved by the Commission until August 199 organisations involved however are advised that cl support from the European social fund is an uncerta lengthy process. My Department is doing all it expedite this process, and some voluntary organi have already received payments for their 1990 pro

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of Sta Employment when the United Kingdom's tran European social fund money was given to his Depar and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: My Department received most of the first advance money for the 1990 programmes supported by the European social fund in October 1990. This money is being paid out to organisations once they have submitted correct applications to my Department. A very real effort has been made to expedite the processing of applications this year. Department of Employment officials have been working overtime in the evenings and at weekends, and extra staff have been recruited to help out.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list *(a)* the total numbers of applications received and *(b)* the number of training places for European social fund support in 1990 for each of the standard regions, England and Wales.

Mr. Forth: The total number of applications for ESF support received in England is 1,954 and in Wales is 223.

The total number of training places envisaged in those applications is 264,445 for England and 18,207 for Wales.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when application forms for European social fund support in 1991 will be available for voluntary sector organisations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: Time scales and procedures for the 1991 European social fund programmes will be set in consultation with the various committees established under the new ESF arrangements. These consultations have begun.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether money from the European social fund will be paid to voluntary organisations in 1990 for projects submitted in the current year.

Mr. Forth: Some voluntary organisations have already received payments for their 1990 projects, and it is expected that payments to the rest which have submitted correct applications for projects running in 1990 will be made during December and January.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the total number of *(a)* training places, *(b)* projects and *(c)* voluntary organisations currently under consideration in applications for assistance by grant aid from the European social fund for 1990.

Mr. Forth: Approximately 2,500 project applications, involving 318,755 training places, are currently under consideration for European social fund assistance for 1990. Of these 2,500 applications, some 500 were from voluntary organisations.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representation he has received from voluntary sector orgnisations about the delay in the payment of European social fund money; and what consultations have taken place with interested organisations.

Mr. Forth: A number of representations have been made to my Department by voluntary sector organisations about the delays in 1990, which is the first year of the new European social fund.

Consultation with interested organisations has taken place at every stage in the process of implementing the new regulations. Since July there have been several meetings with representatives of the voluntary sector and other organisations concerned to discuss the 1990 procedures for obtaining support under the fund.

Employment Training

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) if he will now publish the full results of the 100 per cent. follow-up survey of employment training leavers; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how frequently updated information from the 100 per cent. follow-up survey of employment training leavers is supplied to operational technical education colleges and Training Agency regional offices; and if he intends to make information available on a similar basis to hon. Members.

Mr. Jackson: The full results of the 100 per cent. follow-up survey of employment training leavers contains records for individual trainees. This information is confidential and it would therefore be inappropriate to publish it. Summary results from the survey are sent monthly to regional offices and TECs. Information is available for hon. Members on a similar basis and is placed in the Library.

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of those who have completed courses under the employment training scheme have entered full-time employment; and what average cost of training this represents as a per capita share of the total costs of the scheme.

Mr. Jackson *[holding answer 26 November 1990]:* Of those trainees who left employment training between July 1989 and June 1990 after completing their agreed training, 26 per cent. went into full-time employment. Of all trainees who left employment training, 40 per cent. achieved a positive outcome, which includes full and part-time employment, self-employment and further training or education. The training cost per ET trainee leaving for a positive outcome is estimated to be £3,500.

Careers Service

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when the internal review of the careers service will be completed; and if its findings will be made available to hon. Members.

Mr. Jackson: The internal review of careers guidance was announced last spring. The review team has now completed its consultations and will be presenting its recommendations shortly. An announcement about decisions emerging from the review will then be made.

Disabled People

Mr. Harris: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he is planning any additional help for disabled people; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: I have decided to give unemployeed people with disabilities priority access to our main employment and training programmes. From April next year they will become one of the key groups for entry on to employment training, the enterprise allowance scheme, job clubs and the job interview guarantee. Training and enterprise councils and the Employment Service will

ensure that people with disabilities who are unemployed will be given this priority recognition. This will help strengthen their opportunity to participate in the labour market.

I have recently written to TEC chairmen about this new priority and special guidance has been issued about people who have special training needs, such as people with disabilities, so as to help TECs plan and implement their strategies for taking action. This is in addition to existing good practice guidance on the training of people with disabilities produced by my Department, most notably the "Building on Ability" guide. Promoting and encouraging dissemination of good practice to and between TECs and training providers will continue to be an important function of the Department. All this is particularly important as currently over 10 per cent. of people on employment training identify themselves as having a disability or long-term health problem.

I also recently launched the new symbol that is currently being promoted by the Employment Service aimed at encouraging and helping employers on a voluntary basis to commit themselves publicly to good policies and practices. Employers have an important role in providing opportunities for people with disabilities. My Department seeks increasingly to promote good employment practices and provide effective advice on recruitment, integration, career development and retention, mainly through the Disablement Advisory Service.

The increased priority being given to people with disabilities on our programmes and the new symbol are reflections of our commitment to ensure that people with disabilities are able to participate fully in training and employment. They already have access to the full range of non-specialist employment services, in many cases with easier eligibility or length of stay rules and special help. The extension of job clubs which I recently announced will further help people with disabilities. Research has shown that in general people who had participated in job clubs were 50 per cent. more likely to be in work than comparable people who had not, but that the difference was even greater for people with disabilities. The job interview guarantee is also being extended and that, too, can provide very significant help to people with disabilities.

There is also a wide range of services and schemes specifically designed to help people with disabilities obtain and retain employment. This includes:

—specialist assessment and rehabilitation services which provided 37,000 courses for over 25,000 people in 1989-90;

—special schemes to help overcome some of the problems people with disabilities may encounter in getting or keeping employment, such as assistance with adapting premises and equipment, with fares to work or with trying out a job or starting a business. Over 7,500 successful applications for help under the special schemes were made in 1989-90;

—funds for voluntary bodies, local authorities and Remploy to provide employment opportunities for severely disabled people who could not otherwise get work. Over 20,000 people with severe disabilities were employed through the sheltered employment programme at the end of 1989-90.

Disablement resettlement officers help people with disabilities make use of these services and identify the right sort of help necessary to meet their employment and training needs. In 1989-90 a total of 20,500 people with disabilities were placed into employment by these officers.

My Department has also issued in recent months two consultation documents which together look for the first time in over 40 years at all the employment a services we provide for people with disabilitie proposals and raise issues for discussion wit improving the effectiveness of the help we ha "Employment and Training for People with was published in June and an evaluation of schemes was published in November. We will b conclusions on what further action we can take the employment and training needs of people w ties, as well as the needs of the labour market, a considered all the comments we receive early n

Dust Emissions

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary Employment if he will commission research o effects of fine dust particulates from ind extractive industries and as to any relationship presence of certain types of dust in the atmosp incidence of asthma.

Mr. Forth *[holding answer 26 November* Health and Safety Executive has conducte research and commissioned a number of studies into the effects of dusts which respiratory sensitisation in a range of industri two current extramural research studies funde the Institute of Occupational Medicine in Edi examines the relationship between exposure silica by workers in the Scottish hard rock qua and a number of respiratory diseases; the oth at the effects of dust and airborne quartz i heavy clay industry.

There have been a considerable numbe researching the causes of respiratory diseases. an HSE-sponsored study "The Surveillanc Related and Occupational Respiratory SWORD—is collating information on oc related respiratory problems; this study is provide a greater understanding of the causes of respiratory diseases including occupationa addition, the HSE has commissioned a researc occupational asthma which is intended t likelihood of sensitisation to some of the age found in industrial environments.

SCOTLAND

Waiting Lists

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary Scotland what was the amount spent on the initiative for the years 1986-87, 1987-88, 1988 and 1990-91, respectively.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The year 1988-89 was of the initiative when £3 million was spent wi in 1989-90. I expect £7·1 million to be spent t

Nuclear Casualties

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary Scotland if he will list all the hospitals in S have been designated to accept nuclear-c casualties; and if he will show in his answer th that have expressed an interest in national h trust status.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The hospitals in Scotland that have been designated to accept nuclear-contaminated casualties are as follows:

Aberdeen Royal Infirmary
Glasgow Royal Infirmary
Western Infirmary, Glasgow
Raigmore Hospital, Inverness
Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh
Dundee Royal Infirmary

Aberdeen royal infirmary as part of the Foresterhill unit has expressed an interest in NHS trust status.

Nurses

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give for the years 1986 to 1990 inclusive *(a)* the number of nurses at each grade employed and *(b)* the number of patients treated at (i) Lennox Castle hospital, (ii) Gartloch, (iii) Leverndale, (iv) Woodilee and (v) Gartnavel Royal.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information requested is set out in the tables.

Lennox Castle Hospital

	1986		1987		1988	
	No.	WTE	No.	WTE	No.	WTE
All qualified hospital staff	310	296·4	307	294·5	309	296·4
Senior nurse 1-5 Clin Man.	2	2·0	2	2·0	2	2·0
Senior nurse 6-8 Clin Man.	15	15·0	14	14·0	10	10·0
Ward sister/charge nurse	96	95·7	90	89·7	84	83·7
Staff nurse	56	49·6	70	64·5	86	81·4
Enrolled nurse	141	134·1	131	124·3	127	119·3
All staff in training		44·5		33·0		39·9
All unqualified hospital staff	245	223·8	326	307·1	340	322·4
Nursing assistant	245	223·8	326	307·1	340	322·4

	1989		1990[1]	
	No.	WTE	No.	WTE
All qualified hospital staff	309	296·8	319	305·9
DNS	1	1·0	1	1·0
Senior nurse 1-6	3	3·0	3	3·0
Nurse scale I	1	1·0	1	1·0
Nurse scale H	9	9·0	8	8·0
Nurse scale G	25	25·0	26	26·0
Nurse scale F	49	48·7	45	44·7
Nurse scale E	70	65·1	78	72·3
Nurse scale D	145	139·7	154	148·1
Nurse scale C	6	4·3	3	1·8
All staff in training		39·3		43·9
All unqualified hospital staff	401	377·2	394	371·7
Auxiliary nurse scale A	369	345·3	357	334·9
Auxiliary nurse scale B	32	31·9	37	36·8

[1]Data as at 31 March

Nursing staff in selected Glasgow hospitals; by grade; at 30 September

Gartloch hospital	1986		1987		1988	
	Number	Whole time equivalent	Number	Whole time equivalent	Number	Whole time equivalent
All qualified hospital staff	254	237·8	274	257·4	259	244·8
Senior nurse 1-5 clinical manager	1	1·0	1	1·0	1	1·0
Senior nurse 6-8 clinical manager	8	8·0	8	8·0	7	7·0
Ward sister/charge nurse	60	59·3	65	64·3	59	58·3
Staff nurse	90	83·5	109	101·8	111	105·5
Senior State Enrolled Nurse	11	11·0	11	11·0	11	10·6
Enrolled nurse	84	75·0	80	71·3	70	62·4
All staff in training		75·4		87·4		53·4
All unqualified hospital staff	138	124·5	161	146·8	172	148·7
Nursing assistant	138	124·5	161	146·8	172	148·7

	1989		1990[1]	
	Number	Whole time equivalent	Number	Whole time equivalent
All qualified hospital staff	223	211·4	226	213·9
DNS	—	—	1	1·0
Senior nurse 1-6	3	3·0	6	6·0
Nurse scale I	2	2·0	1	1·0
Nurse scale H	4	4·0	3	3·0
Nurse scale G	24	24·0	26	26·0
Nurse scale F	22	21·7	18	17·7
Nurse scale E	88	82·3	84	77·9
Nurse scale D	58	54·7	67	62·4
Nurse scale C	22	19·7	20	18·9
All staff in training	—	52·4	—	51·6
All unqualified hospital staff	156	134·4	164	140·6
Auxilliary nurse	156	134·4	164	140·6

[1] Data as at 31 March.

Leverndale Hospital

	1986		1987		1988	
	Number	Whole time equivalent	Number	Whole time equivalent	Number	Whole equi
All qualified hospital staff	304	292·1	321	306·3	315	
Senior nurse 6-8 Clinical Manager	15	15·0	14	14·0	12	
Ward sister/charge nurse	76	76·0	80	80·0	72	
Staff nurse	107	101·2	130	122·4	145	
Senior SEN	11	11·0	10	10·0	8	
Enrolled nurse	95	88·9	87	79·9	78	
All staff in training		88·6		98·8		
All unqualified hospital staff	262	220·6	258	221·1	244	
Nursing assistant	262	220·6	258	221·1	244	

	1989		1990[1]	
	Number	Whole time equivalent	Number	Whole time equivalent
All qualified hospital staff	315	296·1	318	297·4
DNS	2	2·0	2	2·0
Senior nurse 1-6	6	6·0	6	6·0
Nurse scale I	2	2·0	2	2·0
Nurse scale H	10	10·0	6	6·0
Nurse scale G	27	27·0	29	29·0
Nurse scale F	37	37·0	31	31·0
Nurse scale E	116	106·6	122	110·8
Nurse scale D	100	91·5	113	104·6
Nurse scale C	15	14·0	7	6·0
All staff in training		78 ·7		79·7
All unqualified hospital staff	243	203·7	223	184·5
Auxiliary nurse scale A	232	192·7	211	173·2
Auxiliary nurse scale B	11	11·0	12	11·3

[1] Data as at 31 March.

Woodilee Hospital

	1986		1987		1988	
	Number	Whole time equivalent	Number	Whole time equivalent	Number	Whol equ
All qualified hospital staff	338	317·8	340	321·1	328	
Senior nurse 1–5 Clinical Manager	1	1·0	1	1·0	1	
Senior nurse 6–8 Clinical Manager	9	9·0	9	9·0	9	
Senior nurse 6–8 Staff Support	1	1·0	1	1·0	1	
Ward sister/charge nurse	82	81·4	83	82·4	77	
Staff nurse	88	80·8	94	86·6	97	
Senior SEN	8	8·0	8	8·0	7	
Enrolled nurse	149	136·6	144	133·1	136	
All staff in training		61·3		61·1		
All unqualified hospital staff	167	150·3	182	166·8	173	
Nursing assistant	167	150·3	182	166·8	173	

	1989		[1]1990	
	Number	Whole time equivalent	Number	Whole time equivalent
All qualified hospital staff	321	308·8	314	302·8
DNS	1	1·0	1	1·0
Senior nurse 1–6 Staff Support	3	3·0	2	2·0
Senior nurse 1–6	4	4·0	3	3·0
Nurse scale H	7	7·0	6	6·0
Nurse scale G	28	28·0	27	27·0
Nurse scale F	43	42·4	40	39·4
Nurse scale E	57	55·7	81	78·8
Nurse scale D	119	114·2	123	117·0
Nurse scale C	59	53·5	31	28·6
All staff in training		49·4		59·8
All unqualified hospital staff	174	162·6	192	180·3

	1989		[1] 1990	
	Number	Whole time equivalent	Number	Whole time equivalent
Auxiliary nurse Scale A	172	160·8	186	174·9
Auxiliary nurse Scale B	2	1·8	6	5·4

[1] Data as at 31 March.

Gartnavel Royal Hospital

	1986		1987		1988	
	Number	Whole time equivalent	Number	Whole time equivalent	Number	Whole time equivalent
All qualified hospital staff	220	207·7	223	211	211	199·6
Senior nurse 1-5 clinical manager	2	2·0	2	2·0	2	2·0
Senior nurse 6-8 clinical manager	8	8·0	7	7·0	5	5·0
Ward sister/charge nurse	59	58·8	58	57·8	56	55·8
Staff nurse	96	87·9	105	97·6	102	95·2
Senior SEN	4	4·0	3	3·0	3	3·0
Enrolled nurse	51	47·0	48	43·6	43	38·6
All staff in training		86·3		75·0		56·7
All unqualified hospital staff	170	155·7	177	162·5	176	162·0
Nursing auxiliary	170	155·7	177	162·5	176	162·0

	1989		1990[1]	
	Number	WTE	Number	WTE
All qualified hospital staff	263	250·5	283	270·6
DNS	1	1·0	1	1·0
Senior Nurse 1-6	3	3·0	4	4·0
Nurse scale I	1	1·0	1	1·0
Nurse scale H	7	7·0	6	6·0
Nurse scale G	27	27·0	23	23·0
Nurse scale F	24	24·0	23	22·0
Nurse scale E	109	101·8	128	122·1
Nurse scale D	88	82·8	90	85·0

	1989		1990[1]
	Number	WTE	Number
Nurse scale C	3	2·9	7
All staff in training		63·6	
All unqualified hospital staff	179	164·8	183
Auxiliary nurse Scale A	169	154·9	172
Auxiliary nurse Scale B	10	9·9	11

[1] Data as at 31 March.

Table 1

Hospital activity statistics for selected Glasgow hospitals: years ending 31 March

	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990
Inpatient Discharges					
Lennox Castle Hospital	157	258	147	150	152
Gartloch Hospital	790	819	808	684	400
Leverndale Hospital	1,183	1,262	1,215	1,226	1,192
Woodilee Hospital	1,378	1,451	1,276	1,317	1,251
Gartnavel Royal Hospital	1,210	1,168	1,238	1,230	1,198
Day Cases					
Lennox Castle Hospital	—	—	—	—	—
Gartloch Hospital	—	—	—	—	—
Leverndale Hospital	—	—	—	—	—
Woodilee Hospital	2,161	2,490	1,256	2,279	3,304
Gartnavel Royal Hospital	—	—	—	—	—
Day Patient Attendances					
Lennox Castle Hospital	—	—	—	—	
Gartloch Hopital	927	1,032	897	553	716
Leverndale Hospital	4,429	4,148	4,316	3,845	3,371
Woodilee Hospital	—	—	—	286	1,072
Gartnavel Royal Hospital	17,504	30,168	31,636	29,520	27,562
Total Outpatient Attendances at Consultant Clinics					
Lennox Castle Hospital	1,774	1,540	1,600	1,842	2,582
Gartloch Hospital[1]	1,880	1,633	1,742	956	—
Leverndale Hospital	4,900	5,042	4,810	7,241	8,330
Woodilee Hospital	5,401	5,896	6,272	6,600	7,574
Gartnavel Royal Hospital	7,621	7,751	8,361	8,625	7,568
Total Inpatient Attendances at Ancillary Departments					
Lennox Castle Hospital	18,221	16,260	14,984	19,618	29,807
Gartloch Hospital	5,481	6,054	4,733	4,233	9,824
Leverndale Hospital	13,867	15,730	14,183	13,433	10,374
Woodilee Hospital	23,730	20,573	15,147	16,109	16,735
Gartnavel Royal Hospital	18,613	15,575	13,328	12,914	22,273

	1986	1987	1988	1989	
Total Outpatient Attendances at Ancillary Departments					
Lennox Castle Hospital	4,975	5,678	6,307	5,129	4,
Gartloch Hospital	2,996	3,108	3,187	2,816	1,
Leverndale Hospital	—	—	—	—	
Woodilee Hospital	3,159	3,971	3,834	3,433	4,
Gartnavel Royal Hospital	1,788	1,864	1,497	2,498	10,

[1] All patients attended Gartloch External Clinics. Closed 31/10/88.
Source: ISD(S)1.

Table 2
Number of Residents at selected Glasgow hospitals; as at 31 December

	1986	1987	1988	1989	
Lennox Castle Hospital	994	935	912	874	
Gartloch Hospital	569	554	484	439	
Leverndale Hospital	860	897	875	865	
Woodilee Hospital	802	749	689	665	
Gartnavel Royal Hospital	549	560	553	527	

n/a = 1990 data not yet available.

Marriage Guidance

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what financial assistance he has made available to Scottish Marriage Guidance in each of the last five years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Funding under section 9 of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 (for training purposes) and under section 10(1)—for headquarters expenses—was offered to Marriage Counselling Scotland, formerly the Scottish Marriage Guidance Council as follows:

	Section 9	Section 10(1)		
		Current	Capital	Total
1986-87	12,200	44,112	1,986	58,298
1987-88	13,500	45,437	2,000	60,937
1988-89	14,600	49,408	2,810	66,818
1989-90	17,700	75,000	2,500	95,200
1990-91	13,400	77,387	—	90,787

Coal Exports

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the current level of coal exports from Scotland to Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: This Department does not collect such information. However, I understand that sales from Scotland to Northern Ireland by British Coal totalled some 1,019,000 tonnes in the year ended 31 March 1990, of which 921,000 tonnes went to the electricity supply industry. British Coal exports for the current year are estimated at around 800,000 tonnes.

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the current levels of coal exports from Scotland to other European countries.

Mr. Lang: Latest figures from the Department of Transport show that in the first nine months of 1990 shipments of coal from Scottish ports to European countries were as follows:

Country	Tonnes
France	65,308
Irish Republic	25,195
Denmark	107,427
Spain	2,9
Sweden	16,7
Finland	57,7
	275,3

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State when he last met with British Coal repr discuss the export of coal to Northern Irel will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: Responsibility for the coal ind Britain rests with my right hon. Friend th State for Energy, who meets the chairman o on a regular basis to discuss all aspects of the

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State what information he has on the number of dependent on coal exports to Ireland.

Mr. Lang: There is no information on t jobs in Ayrshire dependent on coal expor However British Coal advises that there are jobs associated with opencast coal mining i which 545 employees are directly employ British Coal or its contractors. The majo from Ayrshire mines is at present bought fo generation and industrial consumption Ireland, with a further small amount expor

Community Services

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary Scotland how many unfilled posts there are Glasgow health board in the communit physiotherapy, occupational therapy and sp respectively.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: At 22 Noven Glasgow health board had identified thre physiotherapy, one in occupational therap speech therapy.

Wild Foxes

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what expenditure is incurred by his Department in controlling the numbers of the wild fox population in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Mansfield (Mr. Meale) on 1 November at column *723*.

Kidney Stones

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many patients with renal calculi have, since 1987, *(a)* been transferred to England for lithotripsy and *(b)* required multiple treatments with the lithotripter at the national centre in Edinburgh.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information is not centrally available.

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what quantity of *(a)* low and *(b)* intermediate-level waste is in Scotland awaiting disposal or transfer to Sellafield at present;

(2) what quantity of *(a)* low and *(b)* intermediate-level nuclear waste has been (i) exported from and (ii) imported into Scotland on an annual basis since 1985.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: With the exception of a small quantity of waste at BNF plc's Chapelcross works, I am not aware of any nuclear waste in Scotland awaiting transfer to Sellafield. All Scottish nuclear establishments other than Dounreay are authorised under the Radioactive Substances Act 1960 to dispose of low-level radioactive waste to BNF plc for burial and the company's facilities at Drigg, Cumbria. Details of these authorisations and the quantities of waste disposal of under their terms may be found in: "Radioactive waste disposal from nuclear sites in Scotland, 1984-1988"—SDD statistical bulletin No. 1(E) 1990—copies of which are in the Library.

From time to time, waste is transferred between United Kingdom nuclear establishments. Such transfers are made under the terms of authorisation granted by the appropriate territorial Department but records are not kept centrally. There have been no overseas imports or exports of nuclear waste.

Sheriff Ewen Stewart

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will instruct a review to be carried out, under section 12 of the Sheriff Courts (Scotland) Act 1971, of the performance by Sheriff Ewen Stewart of his shrieval duties.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend has requested no such review.

Sheriffs (Dismissal Procedures)

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will set out the procedures under which a sheriff may be dismissed; and if he has any proposals for their reform.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Procedures for the removal from office of a sheriff, in which are involved the Lord President of the Court of Session, the Lord Justice Clerk, the Secretary of State and the Houses of Parliament are contained in section 12 of the Sheriff Courts (Scotland) Act 1971. My right hon. and learned Friend has, at present, no proposals for the reform of these provisions.

Health Service Conference, Peebles

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the attendance of senior officials of the national health service and Scottish health boards at a conference organised by the Institute of Health Services Management and funded by private health care contractors at Peebles in November.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 26 November 1990]:* This conference, which is held biennially, was organised by the Scottish division of the Institute of Health Services Management. These conferences are an important forum for discussing health-related matters and the IHSM invites many interested people, including health service and health board officials. Funding for the conference is a matter for the organisers.

Government Researchers

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list research projects and researchers awarded funding by the Scottish Education Department during 1990.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 26 November 1990]:* Details of current educational research projects, including those awarded in 1990, are contained in the Scottish Education Department's publication "Educational Research 1989-90", copies of which are in the Library. In addition to projects listed therein, the Scottish Education Department has awarded funding in 1990 for the following research:

Project	*Researcher*
Education of Pupils with Moderate Learning Difficulties and Contribution of Modern Foreign Languages	Private individual
Evaluation of the Policy of Pupils with Special Educational Needs in Dumfries and Galloway	The Scottish Council for Research in Education
Assessment processes, planning and resource allocation in placing people with learning difficulties in supported accommodation	University of Dundee
Correlation between child sexual abuse and domestic violence	Women's Support Project, Glasgow
Needs of families of children with epilepsy	University of Glasgow
Monitoring and evaluation of aspects of the post adoption scheme offered by family care	University of Edinburgh and University of Glasgow
Assessment of older people considered for institutional care	University of Edinburgh

Speech Therapy

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what funding will be made available to Scottish education authorities to enable them to meet the requirements of his inspectors in respect of provision of speech therapy services; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 26 November 1990]:* Expenditure by education authorities to provide for special educational needs, including, where appropriate, speech therapy services, is supported by the aggregate external finance settlement.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 28 November 1990

NORTHERN IRELAND

Public Spending

Mr. Bellingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about the allocation to individual programmes in Northern Ireland of the public expenditure totals announced on 8 November.

Mr. Brooke: In his autumn statement on 8 November, my right hon. Friend the former Chancellor of the Exchequer announced total public expenditure planning figures for the Northern Ireland programme. I have now decided on the allocations to individual programmes shown in the table: copies of a more detailed statement have been placed in the Library. These allocations reflect my assessment of how best to distribute the Northern Ireland public expenditure totals in response to local needs and circumstances.

£ million

Programme	*1991-92*	*1992-93*	*1993-94*
Northern Ireland Office:			
Law, Order Protective and Miscellaneous Services	762	810	860
Northern Ireland Departments:			
Northern Ireland Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Services and Support	116	120	120
Industry Trade and Employment	466	430	420
Energy	−72	0	0
Transport	165	170	180
Housing	259	270	270
Environmental and Miscellaneous Services	167	200	210
Law, Order and Protective Services (Fire Service)	35	40	40
Education	1,120	1,180	1,230
Health and Personal Social Services	1,160	1,220	1,270
Social Security Administration	128	140	130
Other Public Services	70	80	80
Total Northern Ireland Block (excluding Social Security Benefits)	4,377	4,650	4,820
Social Security Benefits	1,960	2,120	2,270
Total Northern Ireland Block	6,337	6,770	7,090
National Agriculture and Fishery Support	85	90	90
Total Northern Ireland Programme	6,422	6,860	7,170

Notes to Table:

(1) Figures are rounded to nearest £1m for 1991-92 and to the nearest £10m for 1992-93 and 1993-94 (thus "£0m" means "less than £5m"). Figures may not sum to totals due to roundings.

(2) As announced in 8 November, the plans reflect the reclassification of the water and sewerage element of the Regional Rate as negative PE. Allowing for this technical change, the overall level of resources represented by the public expenditure plans overall, and the Environmental and Miscellaneous Services programme in particular, are effectively some £110m a year higher than the figures in the table.

(3) The figure for the Energy programme for 1991-92 is negative because it is anticipated NIE will be repaying loans to Government in that year. The PE plans for the Energy Programme for 1992-93 and 1993-94 have been adjusted to reflect Government's intention that NIE should be privatised early in 1992. This produces total plans for NI for those years which are some £120m higher than would otherwise be the case.

(4) Figures for social security administration also include district councils' share of rate rebates.

(5) The figures are now net of VAT refunds to the Government of Northern Ireland: this is a classification change which does not affect the spending power of departments nor the year on year comparisons.

(6) The planning figures for 1991-92 form the basis for preparation by Northern Ireland Departments and the Northern Ireland Office of Main Estimates for the coming year. These will be presented to Parliament in due course.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Anti-Jewish Leaflets

Mr. Janner: To ask the Attorney-General whether he will institute proceedings in respect of the anti-Jewish leaflet, "The Snides of March."

The Attorney-General: I am not yet in possession of all the material that I need to enable me to make a decision concerning the institution of proceedings. I shall make my decision when I have considered the results of further related police inquiries which have been requested by the Director of Public Prosecutions.

Commonhold

Mr. Fishburn: To ask the Attorney-General whether he will make a statement about the publication of draft legislation to implement a commonhold scheme.

The Attorney-General: The Government are today publishing a document entitled "Commonhold: A Consultation Paper"—Cm. 1345. It includes a draft Bill. Comments are invited on this draft legislation and also on certain important policy issues, in particular whether provision should be made enabling the conversion to commonhold of residential long leasehold flats and other developments against the wishes of the landlord. The consultation paper is also available in a version without the draft Bill attached—Cm. 1346.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Claim Forms (Verification)

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what evidence he has of failure by local authorities to verify details on claim forms for housing benefit and community charge benefit; how many local authorities have failed so to verify; and if he will list them in the *Official Report*.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: It is the responsibility of local authorities to decide what information it is reasonable to ask for in order to determine an individual's entitlement to housing benefit or community charge benefit. Administrative practices vary from authority to authority and information is not collected centrally on the detail of these practices.

HEALTH

Residential Care Homes

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he plans to take to ensure that nursing and residential homes are fully licensed to care for patients before the patient is sent there upon release from the hospital.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Department of Health guidance asks health authorities to ensure that appropriate plans are made for the continuing care of patients as necessary on their discharge from hospital. These plans should include ensuring that a nursing or residential care home placement is suitable and acceptable in all respects.

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he plans to take to ensure that owners of a residential home who are deemed unfit to run a home will not later open another similar facility.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: It is for local authorities to satisfy themselves, by making thorough inquiries, of the suitability of applicants for registration of residential care homes. The Department assists by acting as a channel of information between authorities about people who have had their registration cancelled and provides a consultancy service to authorities seeking information about applications for homes with children and young people under age 18.

Ashworth Hospital, Mayhill

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will make a statement concerning staffing levels at Ashworth hospital, Mayhill, on 19 November;

(2) if he will institute a public inquiry into the death of Derek Anthony Williams at Ashworth hospital, Mayhill, on 19 November; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he will make a statement on the death of Derek Anthony Williams at Ashworth hospital, Mayhill, on 19 November.

Mr. Dorrell: I am writing to the hon. and learned Member about this tragic incident and would like to record here how I very much regret the sad death of Mr. Williams and offer my sympathy to his parents.

The Special Hospitals Service Authority, which is responsible for the management of Ashworth hospital, is urgently setting up an independent inquiry into the circumstances surrounding Mr. Williams' death.

The management of Ashworth hospital have already launched their own internal inquiry. An early finding is that on the morning of 19 November, with the exception of one ward designated to the care of mentally handicapped female patients, all wards in Ashworth hospital, including that in which Mr. Williams died, were fully manned. During the afternoon and night shifts all wards were fully manned.

ENVIRONMENT

Homelessness

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what was the number of registered homeless people in each of the 32 London boroughs on 17 November;

(2) what was the known number of homeless people in the United Kingdom on 16 November.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Local authorities have a statutory duty to secure accommodation for households who have been found to be homeless or threatened with homelessness, under part III of the Housing Act 1985. The numbers of households accepted and found accommodation are reported quarterly to the Department. Latest estimates for England, and figures reported by the London boroughs, appear in tables 1(a) and 7, respectively, of "Local authorities' action under the homeless provisions of the 1985 Housing Act: England. Results for the second quarter 1990. Supplementary Tables". A copy is in the Library.

For information about other parts of the United Kingdom, I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Wales, for Scotland and for Northern Ireland.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Ken Hargreaves: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received about unpaid community charges in Lancashire; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: I am not aware of any such representations.

The Department's information is that the proportion of residents who had made payments by the end of September varied from 80·4 per cent. in Burnley and 81 per cent. in west Lancashire to 96 per cent. in Hyndburn and 97·2 per cent. in Fylde. This range suggests that some authorities perform more efficiently than others and I look to all authorities to minimise arrears in the four months that remain of this financial year.

Ministerial Committee

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the first meeting of the new standing ministerial committee on the environment will take place; which Ministers will sit on this committee; what matters will be discussed; and through whom it will be accountable to Parliament.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: It is not the practice to disclose the detailed arrangements for Cabinet committees.

Pollution Inspectorate

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the report of the National Audit Office into the organisation of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution will be published.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: This is a matter for the Comptroller and Auditor General.

Bathing Beaches

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action is available to him if water companies are unable to bring the designated beaches within their area into compliance with the EEC 1976 bathing waters directive by 1995.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: A number of actions are available to the Secretary of State under the Water Act 1989 including, ultimately, termination of the company's appointment as a sewerage undertaker. In addition, if the company were in breach of discharge consent conditions set by the National Rivers Authority it could be liable to prosecution by the authority.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* for each designated bathing beach in England sampled in the summer of 1990 (i) the E. Coli and (ii) the total coliform level of each sample taken, together with the date that the sampling took place.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: No. This information is already held in the public registers maintained by the National Rivers Authority.

Disabled Facilities Grants

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what guidance he has issued to social services departments regarding the new system of disabled facilities grants.

Mr. Key: A departmental circular 10/90 on "House Adaptations for People with Disabilities" was issued jointly with the Department of Health on 18 June 1990. Copies were sent to all local housing and social services authorities.

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to monitor the impact of the system of disabled facilities grants and the impact of the means test on disabled people.

Mr. Key: The Department is undertaking a sample survey of 40 local authorities in England to monitor activity under the new house renovation grants system. All aspects of the system are covered by the review including the impact of disabled facilities grants and the test of resources.

Pollution Inspectorate

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any plans to increase the powers available to Her Majesty's inspectors of pollution.

Mr. Trippier: The Environmental Protection Act 1990 strengthens the powers available to Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution—HMIP—for controlling all major emissions to air, land and water from the processes with most potential to cause pollution; for policing the storage and disposal of radioactive substances and wastes; and for overseeing local authorities' performance of their waste regulation functions. Our White Paper on the environment, published in the summer, proposes that HMIP's powers could be further strengthened by making it a candidate to become a "next steps" agency. This would give them an enhanced status and a clearly separate identity, which should strengthen their authority in controlling pollution.

Rivers, Derbyshire

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give figures for the number of rivers classed 1A, 1B and 2 in Derbyshire and those classed 3 and 4.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The latest available information is in the form of maps showing the classification of all rivers included in the 1985 river quality survey of England and Wales. Copies are available in the Library of the House. The National Rivers Authority is conducting another national survey this year.

Planning Permission

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those occasions since 1971 on which he or his predecessors have used section 276 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971 to revoke planning permission; and if he will indicate any compensation that was awarded.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Reading, East (Sir G. Vaughan) on 27 November, *Official Report*, column *333*.

Environmental Protection Act 1990

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to publish a timetable for implementation of the Environmental Protection Act 1990; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: I have today placed in the Library copies of our target timetable for implementation of the Environmental Protection Act 1990. Part A of the timetable sets out for each subject area of the Act target dates for key tasks such as consultation on draft regulations, the laying of regulations and the ultimate target commencement dates. Part B lists the key tasks in chronological order.

The timetable covers implementation plans for the whole Act with the exception of the regulatory system

under part II—waste on land. This brings a complete overhaul of our existing waste management systems and we are presently working on the timetable for this. A further announcement will be made on part II as soon as possible.

The Environmental Protection Act is a landmark in environmental legislation. It brings with it valuable opportunities to enhance our domestic environment and contribute significantly to the development of international environmental policy. We must all be prepared to seize these opportunities so that future generations can benefit from a cleaner, healthier and greener world.

Sewage Discharges

Mr. Carrington: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the estimated cost of providing treatment for sewage discharges to estuarial and coastal waters.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The cost of providing primary treatment for coastal discharges and secondary treatment for estuarial discharges for populations above 10,000 was estimated at around £1·5 billion by Consultants in Environmental Sciences Ltd. A copy of its report "Study of Coastal Sewage Discharges" is available in the Library. CES Ltd. has recently completed a further study to refine its earlier estimate and to include the cost of providing secondary treatment for discharges to estuaries for populations between 2,000 and 10,000 as required by the draft municipal waste water directive. The revised estimate of costs is now put at some £2·16 billion. Copies of the latest study by CES are being placed in the Library.

Marine Environment, North Sea

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if the Government have measured the effects on sensitive marine environments from discharges of nitrates and phosphates into the North sea; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory *[holding answer 27 November 1990]:* A substantial part of the marine research budgets of several Government Departments is devoted to work on nutrients and there is extensive monitoring of nutrient levels around our coasts.

Monitoring of nutrient levels in coastal and estuarial waters has taken place since 1960 and is now the responsibility of the National Rivers Authority. While nutrient inputs from rivers may have increased, there is no evidence of an increase in nutrients offshore. Monitoring by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland has led to the same conclusion.

Beach Pollution

Mr. John Garrett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when his Department will produce its observations on the fourth report of the Select Committee on the Environment, on pollution of beaches.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory *[holding answer 27 November 1990]:* The Government's response will be published next month.

Building Control Fees

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for t Environment when he next intends to review loc authority building control fees.

Mr. Key *[holding answer 27 November 1990* Regulations will be laid before the House shortly whi will propose increases in building control fees in respect the erection of small domestic buildings, garages, carpo and small extensions and alterations to domestic buildin by, on average, 7 per cent, to take effect from 1 Februa 1991.

My officials are discussing with the relevant loc authority associations a restructuring of the fe regulations, with a view to preparing the way for allowi local authorities to set their own levels of fees. I hope issue a consultation paper early next year.

Urban Programme

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for t Environment if he will show for each authority current entitled to apply for urban programme funding and summary for all such authorities, for each year fro 1981-82 to the latest year for which figures are available, constant prices *(a)* the amount of rate support grant revenue support grant received and *(b)* total gra received under the urban programme.

Mr. Chris Patten *[holding answer 19 November 1990* The total amounts of *(a)* rate support grant or reven support grant received and *(b)* urban programm expenditure allocated to the 57 authorities current entitled to apply for urban programme funding, for ea year from 1981-82 to 1990-91, at 1990-91 prices, were follows:

	Revenue support grant £ billion	*Urban programme £ billion*
1981-82	4·232	0·238
1982-83	3·642	0·317
1983-84	3·591	0·318
1984-85	3·431	0·320
1985-86	3·339	0·316
1986-87	3·622	0·297
1987-88	3·653	0·321
1988-89	3·667	0·295
1989-90	3·611	0·268
1990-91	4·592	0·259

I shall send the hon. Gentleman tables showing deta for all the authorities. Copies of these tables will be plac in the Libraries of the House.

TRANSPORT

Public Transport

Mr. Trotter: To ask the Secretary of State f Transport whether he will make a statement about t funding of local public transport schemes in England.

Mr. Freeman: We are providing resources for the £1 million Manchester metrolink light rail scheme, includi more than £50 million of grant. Construction is w advanced, and operations should begin late next year.

Subject to my receiving assurances from the Sou Yorkshire passenger transport authority about cos

contributions to be made by the parties involved, and transfer in due course to the private sector, the £230 million supertram project proposed for Sheffield will be the next light rail scheme to go ahead. Substantial Government grant suppport will be provided.

As I announced on 26 November, we are reserving resources for a start on the electrification of the railway infrastructure in the Bradford area.

Light rail schemes are being actively considered in other areas. Parliament has granted powers for a number of lines, including the proposed midland metro line between Birmingham and Wolverhampton. The appraisal of that scheme is currently in progress, and we hope that it will be completed as soon as possible. If it proves satisfactory, we will be ready to consider paying grant next year towards the cost of developing the scheme in detail. We will consider other proposals on the same basis, subject to the availability of resources.

We also remain committed to taking full advantage of the important contribution which the bus can make to improving the quality of public transport in urban areas. We are examining urgently the proposals put forward by the Bus and Coach Council, including the possibility of earmarking resources for measures to promote bus use, and hope to respond in the new year.

Transport Deaths

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list in tabular form the number of rail deaths for each year from 1970 to 1989, inclusive, showing *(a)* total figures and *(b)* by category of (i) British Rail drivers, (ii) other British Rail staff and (iii) passengers.

Mr. McLoughlin: The table shows fatalities in accidents on all railway premises. The staff figures include all railway employees; no separate figures are available for British Rail staff fatalities. Similarly, I am unable to provide a breakdown between drivers and other railway employees.

Year	Total	Railway staff	Passengers	Other persons
1970	143	67	55	21
1971	125	60	47	18
1972	99	48	30	21
1973	97	42	42	13
1974	78	38	26	14
1975	127	46	69	12
1976	97	46	30	21
1977	84	34	30	20
1978	114	45	47	22
1979	107	43	52	12
1980	69	32	26	11
1981	76	27	39	10
1982	57	27	20	10
1983	69	28	29	12
1984	76	25	39	12
1985	74	25	33	16
1986	97	16	32	24
1987	104	16	68	20
1988	97	16	69	12
1989	69	18	33	18

Notes:
1. Includes contractors' staff from 1984 onwards.
2. Excluding trespassers, suicides and attempted suicides.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list in tabular form the death rate per thousand miles travelled for each year from 1970 to 1989 (inclusive) for *(a)* car, *(b)* rail, *(c)* air (United Kingdom airlines), *(d)* air (within United Kingdom airspace), *(e)* bicycle, *(f)* motor bike, *(g)* lorry, *(h)* bus, *(i)* ship (United Kingdom-registered vessels) and *(j)* ship (within United Kingdom waters).

Mr. McLoughlin: The readily available information is set out in the table.

An article concerning fatality rates by mode of transport appears in the Department's publication "Transport Statistics Great Britain 1979-1989", pages 1 to 5, which is available in the Library.

Further information is either unavailable or could be supplied only at disproportionate cost.

Passenger fatality rates by mode 1975-89

Per billion passenger kilometres

	Air[1]	Rail	Water[2]	Bus or coach	Car[3]	Two-wheeled motor vehicle[3]	Pedal cycle	Pedestrian
1975	0·0	2·0	0·5	1·9	7·6	153·3	62·8	93·8
1976	1·3	0·9	2·6	1·1	7·4	144·6	60·0	93·4
1977	0·0	0·8	0·0	1·1	7·0	176·0	59·3	92·5
1978	0·0	1·3	0·5	1·0	6·9	175·1	61·8	97·1
1979	0·2	1·4	1·8	0·6	6·5	168·1	69·9	84·7
1980	2·0	0·7	1·3	0·6	5·8	140·0	59·2	77·6
1981	0·2	1·0	0·4	0·4	5·7	117·7	56·8	75·0
1982	0·0	0·6	0·9	0·7	6·0	109·1	45·9	74·8
1983	0·3	0·8	0·9	0·8	4·9	107·3	50·5	76·6
1984	0·0	1·1	0·0	0·8	5·0	109·7	53·8	74·7
1985	0·7	0·9	3·5	0·7	4·7	100·0	47·0	71·6
1986	0·5	0·8	0·5	0·6	4·8	99·8	49·5	74·4
1987	0·0	1·0	69·8	0·4	4·4	99·8	48·8	68·1
1988	0·0	1·7	0·5	0·3	4·1	114·0	45·7	70·1
1989	0·0	0·8	22·8	0·5	4·4	100·1	56·8	68·2

Notes:
[1]World passenger carrying services of United Kingdom airlines for fixed and rotary wing craft over 2,300 kilograms. Passenger kilometres relate to revenue passengers only.
[2]Domestic and international passenger services of United Kingdom-registered vessels.
[3]Drivers and passengers in Great Britain.

Motor Cycle Driving Licence

Mr. Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what facilities will be available by 1 December within *(a)* the borough of Berwick upon Tweed, *(b)* Alnwick district and *(c)* Castle Morpeth district for the basic training necessary for obtaining a provisional motor cycle driving licence after 1 December.

Mr. Chope: Sites have been approved for basic training at Berwick upon Tweed and Belford in the borough of Berwick upon Tweed and at Alnwick in Alnwick district. No sites have been approved within Castle Morpeth district, but sites have been approved nearby at Ashlington and Cramlington. I expect the operators of all these sites to be offering basic training courses from 1 December. Completion of basic training is not a requirement for the issue of a provisional licence, but a licence issued on or after 1 December will not be valid for riding on the road, unaccompanied by an instructor, until a certificate of completion of basic training has been obtained.

Rail Links

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to use the rate of return criteria used to sanction investment in the east-west underground rail link through London for proposals for electrification of lines in Scotland.

Mr. Freeman: The east-west cross rail link was approved on the basis that reduced road congestion and other benefits to non-users more than justified the cost to the public sector. My right hon. Friend stated in his 1989 objectives for BR that where, exceptionally, investment in Network SouthEast or provincial services is needed to meet growth in demand but cannot meet the required financial return, cost-benefit analysis can be used.

Carbon Monoxide Emissions

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport for what technical basis was the proposed standard of 4·5 per cent. carbon monoxide for emission testing in the MOT test determined; what proportion of the current car fleet is technically capable of meeting an emission standard of *(a)* 4 per cent. carbon monoxide and *(b)* 3 per cent. carbon monoxide at idle; and what levels of carbon monoxide are typically produced by new models of car at idle.

Mr. Chope: The proposed 4·5 per cent. carbon monoxide standard derives from EC directive 78/665, which lays down maximum levels of emissions permitted from new vehicles. There is no detailed information available on the number of vehicles that should be able to meet more rigorous carbon monoxide standards, but most modern cars should be capable of achieving lower levels provided they are tuned in accordance with manufacturers' recommendations.

M4

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the nature and function of the works unit off the eastbound carriageway of the M4 between junctions 14 and 13; what was the cost of erecting the "works unit only" signs for the works unit; when the road between the works unit and the motorway was completed; what was t of the road between the works unit and the motorw from which subheads of which votes this money wa

Mr. Chope: The works unit referred to is RAF W which is made available to the United States air fo conventional munitions storage. The "works uni signs which are to the conventional red, white an design as used for MoD establishments cost £6,63 provide and erect. The entry and exit slip roads, from the motorway, were completed on 17 Decemb and 2 July 1985 respectively. The final cost construction of the slip roads was £377,081·84. works costs were funded by United States air force also contributed towards administration expenses.

Diesel Smoke

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of St Transport what regulations control the emission o smoke from railway engines; which agency is resp for enforcement; and what action has been ta control such emissions.

Mr. Freeman: Emission of dark smoke from engines is subject to regulations under section 1 Clean Air Act 1956. Enforcement is a matter fo authorities. Under the Environmental Protecti 1990, railway engines other than steam locomotive become subject to statutory nuisance action b authorities or individuals. Action to control emissi matter for operators and the enforcement authori

M6 (Gravelly Hill Interchange)

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of St Transport if he will make a statement outlining reas the delay in repairs to the Gravelly hill interchang M6 motorway following the accident of 26 Augus

Mr. Chope: The accident resulted in severe str damage requiring the closure of two slip roads.

An urgent investigation began into the effects of damage and possible remedial works includi possibility of demolishing and reconstructing the structure.

There are a number of technical matters stil resolved, but I hope that work on a replacement st will commence before the end of the year.

Disabled Drivers

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Tr what representations he has received concerning u wheelclamping of orange badge holders.

Mr. Chope: Orange badge holders are exemp wheelclamping on the street in areas where wheelcl is authorised. The exemption does not, however, ex private car parks or other private land.

Railway Inspectorate

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of S Transport when the railway inspectorate w transferred to the Health and Safety Executive; a will make a statement.

Mr. Parkinson: As I told my hon. Friend the M for Kingswood (Mr. Hayward) on 19 July, at colu

I have decided to transfer the railway inspectorate to the Health and Safety Executive. Following consultations with my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Employment, and the chairman of the Health and Safety Commission, I have now made an agency agreement with the commission for the discharge of my railway safety functions. Under this agreement, the railway inspectorate will transfer to the Health and Safety Executive on 1 December, where its identity will be maintained. There will be no change in ministerial responsibilities. I will remain answerable on all matters affecting railway passenger safety. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Employment will remain accountable for railway employee safety matters under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974.

Public Service Vehicles

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give details of the number of accidents involving public service vehicles carrying schoolchildren from 1979 to date; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: The presence of schoolchildren on a public service vehicle involved in a personal injury accident is not routinely recorded by the police. It is, however, possible to identify accidents in which children travelling to or from school on a PSV were themselves injured. The table gives figures for 1979 to 1989:

Number of road accidents in which children, up to and including age 16, travelling to or from school on public service vehicles suffered injury or death; 1979-1989:

	Number
1979	207
1980	218
1981	209
1982	275
1983	281
1984	289
1985	275
1986	261
1987	219
1988	218
1989	254

Casualties resulting from these PSV accidents are:

Number of casualties in road accidents involving children travelling to or from school by Public Service Vehicle; 1979-89

	Fatal	*Serious*	*Slight*	*Total*
1979	2	44	348	394
1980	2	42	443	487
1981	0	29	341	370
1982	3	35	362	400
1983	2	40	375	417
1984	0	72	500	572
1985	0	43	487	530
1986	1	34	429	464
1987	0	36	451	487
1988	0	24	429	453
1989	1	47	531	579

The figures show that these casualties represent less than 0·2 per cent. of all road casualties and less than 0·1 per cent. of deaths and serious injuries.

East London River Crossing

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received concerning the applicability of the European Community environmental impact assessment directive 1985 to the proposed east London river crossing.

Mr. Chope: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given to the hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright) on 23 November at column *231*.

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what advice his Department has sought concerning the applicability of the European Community environmental impact assessment directive 1985 and the Highways (Assessment of Environmental Effects) Regulations 1988 to the proposed east London river crossing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: No environmental assessment under the directive was required in relation to the line and side road orders for this scheme, which were published in 1984. An assessment in the form of an appraisal framework of the environmental effects of the scheme was published in 1985, and taken into account by the Secretaries of State in reaching their decision. The directive has been applied to the proposed design changes for which an environmental statement was published in January 1990.

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will conduct an environmental impact assessment study for *(a)* the east London river crossing and *(b)* M11 link projects; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: An assessment in the form of an appraisal framework of the environmental effects of the east London river crossing was published in 1985. The likely environmental effects of the scheme were also exhaustively considered at lengthy public inquiries during 1985-86. An environmental statement on the effects of the proposed design changes to the scheme from the A13 to the A2016 was published in January 1990. Public inquiries are currently being held into the proposed design changes, at which the Department has presented detailed evidence on the effects of the design changes.

Evidence on the environmental impact of the A12 Hackney-M11 link road was presented at public inquiries held in 1983 and 1987 and was fully taken into account when the decisions to proceed with the scheme were taken.

Roads, Birmingham

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects the damage to the slip road between the Aston expressway and spaghetti junction in Birmingham to be repaired.

Mr. Chope: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) today. The slip roads should be reopened in the summer.

ENERGY

British Gas

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what consultations he has had with the Director of Public Prosecutions and the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis regarding the funding of further computer runs to detect multiple share applications for British Gas.

Mr. Wakeham: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 21 November 1990, at column *148*.

North Sea Installations

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the earliest year for which he can differentiate between prosecutions mounted against operators in the North sea which resulted from *(a)* inspections and *(b)* accidents; and what are the figures for that year and each subsequent year.

Mr. Wakeham: Information is not kept in a form by which prosecutions resulting from inspections and from accidents can be distinguished without disproportionate cost.

The six convictions of companies for breaches of health and safety legislation in 1987, 1988 and 1989 all resulted from accidents.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the earliest year for which he can, without incurring disproportionate cost, give the percentage of serious accidents on North sea installations which have been investigated by his inspectors; and what was the percentage in that year and each subsequent year.

Mr. Wakeham: Accident data are not kept in a form from which the information requested can be extracted without disproportionate cost.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the earliest year for which he can give the total spent on the North sea safety inspectorate of his Department without incurring disproportionate cost; and what is the figure for that year and subsequent years at constant prices.

Mr. Wakeham: Running costs for the safety directorate for the period 1989-90 were of the order of £7·2 million. Figures for earlier years cannot be separately identified.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy, further to his answer of 21 November to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras, *Official Report*, column *150*, how the 475 technical staff referred to are broken down between the six certifying authorities.

Mr. Wakeham: The information requested by the hon. Member is as follows:

Certifying Authority	*Number of Technical Staff Employed*
Lloyd's Register of Shipping	275
Bureau Veritas	20
American Bureau of Shipping	70
Det Norske Véritas	90
Germanischer Lloyd	8
Offshore Certification Bureau	12
	475

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether the serious accidents referred to in his answer of 21 November, *Official Report*, column *149*, to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras, represent the numbers seriously injured or the number of incidents involving serious injury.

Mr. Wakeham: The numbers of serious acci referred to in my answer of 21 November represen numbers of persons injured.

Electricity Privatisation

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for E what will be the total fees paid out in respect of U Kingdom primary underwriting, United Kin sub-underwriting and overseas underwriting o regional electricity company flotations.

Mr. Wakeham: Subject to the terms of the underw agreements the commissions paid out for underwriti regional electricity company flotations will be:

	£ millio
United Kingdom primary underwriting:	6·
United Kingdom sub-underwriting:	29·
Overseas underwriting:	12·

Piper Alpha

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for E how many *(a)* clear breaches of regulations, *(b)* pro breaches and *(c)* possible breaches were involved fire and explosion on Piper Alpha on 24 March 19

Mr. Wakeham: It is for the courts to determi matters brought before them, whether breaches of th have occurred.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for E how many hours were spent on the inspections of Alpha on 21 February 1984, excluding the helic flights and meal breaks; and how many inspectors involved.

Mr. Wakeham: The information requested i available.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for E how many hours were spent on the inspections of Alpha on 25 and 26 March 1984, excluding the helic flights and meal breaks; and how many inspectors involved.

Mr. Wakeham: The visit by one inspector to Alpha on 25 and 26 March 1984 was not an inspectio an investigation of the explosion in the gas compr module on 24 March. The information requested on spent is not available.

Offshore Installations

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for E how many occasions in each year since 1978 his insp have used their powers under the Mineral Wo (Offshore Installations) Act 1971 to prohibit an activ use of equipment or to require improvement.

Mr. Wakeham: Action to effect improvement feature of almost every inspection. Such action takes against the background of inspectors' powers und Mineral Workings (Offshore Installations) Act 19 detailed breakdown of the kind requested cou provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for E how many full-time field inspectors engaged in off installation inspections were employed by his Depar in each year since 1978.

Mr. Wakeham: The number of full-time field inspectors engaged in offshore installation inspections since 1986 is set out in the table.

Date	*Staff in post*
1986	7
1987	5
1988	6
1989	7
1990	6

All figures relate to 1 November of the year in question. There is no data prior to 1986.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Overseas Aid Review

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the cost of publishing the 1990 annual review of British overseas aid.

Mrs. Chalker: The total cost of publishing the 1990 annual review of British overseas aid was £76,504·90, a unit cost of £5·10.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Horserace Totalisator Board

Mr. Alexander: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list *(a)* the qualifications and *(b)* the dates of original appointment of members of the Horserace Totalisator Board.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Board members are appointed by the Home Secretary under section 12(2) of the Betting, Gaming and Lotteries Act 1963; there are no statutory qualifications for appointment to the board, although appointment as an executive member of the board is in practice contingent upon employment by the Horserace Totalisator Board in an executive capacity. Considerations influencing the selection of non-executive members include what commercial or other relevant experience they may bring to the board.

The current members of the board, the dates of their original appointments, and their occupations, as detailed in the Tote's annual report and accounts, are as follows:

Lord Wyatt of Weeford—Member 1 November 1975, chairman 1 May 1976, Director of Satellite Information Services Ltd.

Lord Swaythling—Member 1 October 1981, chairman of Rothmans International plc, a member of the board of Banking Supervision of the Bank of England, and a non-executive director of the Daily Telegraph plc. Racehorse owner.

Mr. P. Winfield FRICS—Member 1 October 1981, Formerly senior partner of Healey & Baker until 1988 and continues to act as a full-time consultant. Chairman of Letinvest plc. and the London Auction Mart Limited, a non-executive director of Manders (Holdings) plc. and a special trustee of Guy's Hospital. Racehorse owner.

Mr. J. Sanderson FCA—Member 1 August 1983, clerk of the course at Doncaster and Catterick Bridge and a director of Thirsk, Wetherby and Phoenix Park, Dublin. He also has business interests in televised sport and leisure.

Mr. B. McDonnell CA—Executive member 1 November 1990, chief executive of the Tote.

Animal Experiments

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list Government expenditure in each of the last five years on funding alternatives to the use of animals in scientific procedures, with the projects supported in each year.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Home Office has been involved in funding research into finding alternatives to the use of living animals since 1984 when financial assistance was provided to two organisations concerned with animals in research. Some £185,000 was given to the Fund for the Replacement of Animals in Medical Experiments—FRAME—to help with three projects: a feasibility study of validation of in vitro techniques which might replace animal experiments; work on a possible database of tissue culture techniques; and an examination of the use of human tissue cultures instead of animals in medical research and toxicity testing. Some £30,000 was given to the Universities Federation for Animal Welfare—UFAW—to support an evaluation of the effects of various cage sizes and social groupings on the well-being of laboratory rats.

With the passing of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986, the Home Office established a scheme which is administered by a sub-committee of the Animal Procedures Committee to provide financial assistance for research for the reduction, refinement or replacement of the use of living animals in scientific procedures. The Home Office also funds research concerned with the welfare of laboratory animals. The Home Office has also supported, and part-funded, international work on acute toxicity testing aimed at further reducing the need for formal LD50 tests.

In 1988-89, the first year of the operation of the scheme, it was decided to fund the following four projects:

(i) Dr. P. A. Botham and Dr. G. J. A. Oliver, ICI Central Toxicology Laboratory. "Validation of an enucleated eye model" (£26,700 over two years)

(ii) Dr. A. F. Bristow and Dr. S. Poole, National Institute for Biological Standards and Control. "Assay of Pyrogens measuring lymphokine production *in vitro*". (£72,700) over three years)

(iii) Dr. A. Robinson, Public Health Laboratory Service "Alternative potency tests for cellular pertussis). (£9,800 over three years).

(iv) Dr. R. M. Stagg, Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, Scotland. "Fish cell culture for toxicity assessment". (£25,700 over two years)

In 1989-90 it was decided to fund the following projects:

(i) Dr. M. E. G. Boursell, AFRC Institute for Animal Health. "Recombinant vaccine against infectious bursal disease virus". (£67,700 over three years)

(ii) Dr. M. Fergusson, National Institute for Biological Standards and Control. "The use of *in vitro* assays for the potency of rabies vaccines". (£10,000 over two years)

(iii) Mr. A. Knight, Wellcome Research Laboratories. "A replacement for the clostridium chauvoei vaccine potency test". (£67,000) over three years)

(iv) Professor D. B. Morton, University of Birmingham. "Evaluation of welfare in the husbandry of laboratory rabbits". (£59,900 over three years)

In 1990-91 one further project has been funded:

Dr. D. E. S. Stewart-Tull, University of Glasgow. "Establishment of an adjuvants (immunomodulating agents) database" (£9,200) over two years)

In addition, on the advice of the Animal Procedures Committee's research sub-committee, the Home Office commissioned a report of an investigation into antibody production: this report formed the basis for appendix III of the "Report of the Animal Procedures Committee for 1989"—HC581; 24 July 1990.

In 1991-92, subject to parliamentary approval, the Home Office is making available £215,000 to assist research in this area. The Animal Procedures Committee is now seeking worth while projects for funding in the next financial year.

Bathing Beaches

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to ban water sports off any bathing beaches in Wales.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Secretary of State has no powers to ban water sports taking place off bathing beaches. Local authorities are able to make byelaws to control public bathing and to regulate the navigation of seaside pleasure boats to prevent danger to bathers, but this does not include power to prohibit particular activities taking place.

NATO

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether any request has been received from *(a)* Interpol or *(b)* other sources, seeking the co-operation of Her Majesty's Government in investigations into allegations of undercover military operations by groups linked to NATO.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Government have received no such request.

Overseas Voters

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what provisions the Government have made to check that overseas voters who have registered for a proxy vote are still eligible to vote on the day of the election.

Mrs. Rumbold: Registration as an elector depends upon eligibility on the qualifying date, and not on the date of any election. No routine checks are made on whether registered electors remain eligible to vote during the currency of the register on which they are included. However, it is an offence for any person, or a proxy acting on his or her behalf, to vote at any election if that person is not eligible to vote.

Criminal Records

Mr. John Greenway: To ask the Secretary of the Home Department if he will announce the reference of the study into the national crimina

Mr. Waddington: I have decided that an scrutiny should be carried out with the followin reference:

Terms of Reference

(i) To review the present arrangements at na local level for the funding, mainten disclosure of the National Collection of Records, to determine whether they efficient and effective service to be provid

(ii) to identify the present and potential sco national collection, and any implications force records of possible changes in the s

(iii) to examine current practice in providing and disclosure from the collection, proposals for any changes in the governing access and disclosure and to sp likely effects; and

(iv) to make recommendations on the future ment and resourcing of the national including arrangements for the supply of tion to the collection and the disc information from it.

The scrutiny will begin in early December and to receive the report next April.

Data Protection

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Secretary of the Home Department what action he is takin draft European Community directive on data pr and whether he will publish the report interdepartmental review committee on th Protection Act 1984.

Mr. Waddington: My Department is wr interested organisations inviting comments on directive and related measures which have been the Commission of the European Communities. placing in the Library of the House, and sendi same organisations, copies of the report interdepartmental committee. The need for legisla be considered when negotiations on the direct been completed.

Remand

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of the Home Department how many women were r into custody, by prison service establishment, in W police division during *(a)* 1987, *(b)* 1988 and *(*

Mrs. Rumbold *[holding answer 23 Novembe* The readily available information is given in the

Females remanded initially into custody by courts in Wales into Prison Service establishments: by court and remand establishment,

	Holloway			*Pucklechurch*			*Estimat*	*Risley*
	1987	*1988*	*1989*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1987*	*198*
Crown Court:								
Cardiff	—	—	—	5	4	1	—	—
Merthyr Tydfil	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	—
Mold	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	
Newport	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—
Swansea	—	—	—	—	1	1	1	—
Magistrates' courts (county):								
Clwyd	1	—	—	—	—	—	14	1
Dyfed	—	—	—	1	9	12	—	—

	Holloway			Pucklechurch			Risley	
	1987	1988	1989	1987	1988	1989	1987	1988
Gwent	—	—	—	20	18	9	—	—
Gwynedd	—	—	—	1	—	—	9	7
Mid Glamorgan	—	—	—	18	8	12	—	—
Powys	—	—	—	—	1	—	1	—
South Glamorgan	—	—	—	20	19	24	—	—
West Glamorgan	—	—	—	18	15	14	—	—
All courts	1	—	—	84	76	75	25	25

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Educational Psychologists

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the actual and recommended numbers of educational psychologists in each local education authority.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The employment of educational psychologists and the management of their educational psychology services are the responsibilities of individual local education authorities. The Department does not issue advice to LEAs on numbers of educational psychologists. The number of educational psychologists employed by each LEA on 19 January 1989 is given in the table:

Number of educational psychologists employed at 19 January 1989

	Number of educational psychologists (full-time equivalent)
LEA	
Barking	7·0
Barnet	15·5
Bexley	6·0
Brent	7·6
Bromley	10·1
Croydon	10·5
Ealing	7·4
Enfield	10·4
Haringey	6·0
Harrow	7·0
Havering	8·0
Hillingdon	7·2
Hounslow	6·3
Kingston	3·0
Merton	5·0
Newham	10·0
Redbridge	8·0
Richmond	5·0
Sutton	5·0
Waltham Forest	9·3
OUTER LONDON	154·3
ILEA	90·3
GREATER LONDON	1244·6
Birmingham	44·1
Coventry	11·0
Dudley	8·5
Sandwell	12·0
Solihull	8·0
Walsall	10·5
Wolverhampton	9·6
Knowsley	7·0
Liverpool	17·5
St. Helens	6·5
Sefton	10·0
Wirral	10·0
Bolton	7·4
Bury	4·8
Manchester	18·0
Oldham	8·6
Rochdale	9·0
Salford	5·5
Stockport	7·8
Tameside	8·0
Trafford	3·0
Wigan	8·0
Barnsley	4·0
Doncaster	9·0
Rotherham	10·2
Sheffield	16·6
Bradford	20·5
Calderdale	6·0
Kirklees	13·5
Leeds	21·0
Wakefield	10·5
Gateshead	7·5
Newcastle	12·0
North Tyneside	8·0
South Tyneside	7·0
Sunderland	11·5
MET COUNTIES	392·1
Isles of Scilly	0
Avon	28·8
Bedfordshire	15·5
Berkshire	19·8
Buckinghamshire	18·0
Cambridgeshire	12·5
Cheshire	13·5
Cleveland	18·5
Cornwall	11·0
Cumbria	15·0
Derbyshire	32·6
Devon	20·2
Dorset	17·6
Durham	18·0
East Sussex	17·3
Essex	39·3
Gloucestershire	13·0
Hampshire	43·7
Hereford and Worcestershire	11·5
Hertfordshire	28·3
Humberside	22·0
Isle of Wight	3·0
Kent	30·0
Lancashire	38·2
Leicestershire	28·5
Lincolnshire	11·0
Norfolk	16·0
North Yorkshire	17·2
Northants	16·3

	Number of educational psychologists (full-time equivalent)
Northumberland	8·3
Nottinghamshire	28·0
Oxfordshire	15·0
Shropshire	13·5
Somerset	11·0
Staffordshire	26·4
Suffolk	13·0
Surrey	30·0
Warwickshire	13·2
West Sussex	14·2
Wiltshire	14·3
NON MET	763·4
Total England	1,400·1

School Premises Regulations

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when the review of the school premises regulations announced on 2 October is to be completed; how the review is to be undertaken; when consultation with interested bodies is to begin; and when it is envisaged that the review will report to him and the Secretary of State for Wales.

Mr. Fallon: The review will be conducted by a joint group of this Department's officials and representatives of the Welsh Office, and will draw on up-to-date information on educational needs and practice. Consultations with interested bodies are expected to begin at an early stage in the group's work. It is too early at this stage to say how long the review will take or when it will report to my right hon. Friends.

Co-ordinating Committee for Marine Science and Technology

Mr. Gill: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he intends to extend the life of the Co-ordinating Committee for Marine Science and Technology beyond 31 December; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Howarth: My right hon. and learned Friend has decided to extend the three-year term of the Co-ordinating Committee for Marine Science and Technology for a further three months until 31 March 1991. This will enable the committee to consider the Government's response to its report on marine science and technology in the United Kingdom.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Coinage

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he made of the requirement for slot machines to be adapted before announcing that the demonetisation of the old 5p piece will take place on 31 December.

Mr. Maples: Every effort has been made to consult the vending industry to minimise the problems it will experience. Companies were given test coins a half years notice so that they could plan reprogramme their machines as far as po normal maintenance cycle.

The demonetisation date for the old 5p announced by the Chancellor at the Trial 27 April 1990. This gave the vending industry to prepare for the change. Most vending m now been converted to accept the new 5p c

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

EC Investment Services Directi

Mr. Favell: To ask the Secretary of State Industry if he will make a statement on the p in securing an exemption from the Europea investment services directive.

Mr. Redwood: Most member states exclusion of solicitors and other mem professions from the scope of the invest directive—ISD. None the less, there are diffi to be resolved if we are to secure the maxi benefit for members of the professions investment businesses, under the ISD. We into account both the attitude of the other m and the level of minimum capital requiremen be imposed under the capital adequacy dir —on all those covered by the ISD. These req higher than the United Kingdom would wi remains open and the Government are in clo the professional bodies on the progress of the

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State Industry what view is taken by the Gover proposed European investment services dir requirements for lawyers giving investment a substantial capital; and if he will make a st

Mr. Redwood: Most member states exclusion of solicitors and other mem professions from the scope of the invest directive—ISD. None the less, there are diffi to be resolved if we are to secure the maxi benefit for members of the professions investment businesses, under the ISD. We into account both the attitude of the other m and the level of minimum capital requiremen be imposed under the capital adequacy dir —on all those covered by the ISD. These req higher than the United Kingdom would wi remains open and the Government are in clo the professional bodies on the progress of the There is a balance to be struck over who is c ISD and what capital they need under it a

Vehicle Tax Discs

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State Industry what criteria are applied when de general or sub post office facilities will be ava supply of motor vehicle tax discs.

Mr. Leigh: This is essentially an operation the Post Office and the Department of Tr location of outlets issuing motor vehicle lice —is determined by the Post Office, within th

by the Department of Transport, and is, I understand, based on such factors as the distance to existing MVL issuing offices and the likely level of business. The size of the MVL issuing network is the result of regular review by the Department of Transport, taking into account convenience to the customer and cost to the taxpayer.

Public Utilities

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what monitoring and action is taken by his Department to stop undue pressure being placed upon the consumers of the services provided by existing or former public utilities for the payment of bills which are held to be outstanding.

Mr. Leigh: The Gas Consumers Council, whose members are appointed by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, represents consumers' interests and investigates complaints. In doing so, it works closely with British Gas plc and the Director General of Gas Supply. British Gas plc has a code of practice on disconnections which provides that no pensioner may be cut off during the winter months and customers experiencing payment difficulties are offered gas payment plans and prepayment meters. As a result, disconnections have fallen sharply from a peak of 60,778 per annum in 1987 to 19,379 in 1989.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry has set up four advisory committees on telecommunications to represent consumers' interests in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. These committees advise the Director General of the Office of Telecommunications on matters affecting consumers of telecommunications services. British Telecom has various ways of dealing with outstanding bills, including in appropriate cases negotiating a payment package for an exceptionally high bill in one quarter due to special circumstances. Moreover, when there are disputes over bills, customers will not be disconnected provided that the undisputed items on the bill are paid.

Following electricity privatisation, responsibility for electricity consumers has now passed to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy.

Clothing Manufacturing Industry

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will give an estimate of the number of people employed in the United Kingdom clothing manufacturing industry in each year since 1979; and if he will make a statement concerning Government policy towards that industry.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 26 November 1990]:* The Department of Employment estimates that the number of employees in the clothing manufacturing industry in Great Britain in each year since 1979 was as follows:

Clothing manufacturing industry Great Britain
Group 453 and 456 (SIC 80)

June	*Thousands*
1979	290·2
1980	261·8
1981	224·1
1982	214·3
1983	207·0
1984	212·2
1985	213·0
1986	210·7
1987	205·0
1988	205·2
1989	199·0
1990	197·3

Notes:
1. Group 453 (SIC80) consists of those industries involved in the manufacture of clothing, hats and gloves. Group 456 (SIC80) consists of those involved in the manufacture of fur goods.
2. Similar estimates are not available for Northern Ireland or for people other than employees in employment.
3. Estimates at this level of industrial detail are subject to substantial estimation error.

Government policy towards the clothing industry, as for industry as a whole, is to set a framework for free and fair competition and the encouragement of enterprise. A range of Government schemes for encouraging enterprise and spreading best practice is available to companies in the industry.

Machine Tool Manufacturing Industry

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will give an estimate of the number of people employed in the United Kingdom machine tool manufacturing industry in each year since 1979; and if he will make a statement concerning Government policy towards that industry.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 26 November 1990]:* The Department of Employment estimates that the number of employees in the machine tool manufacturing industry in Great Britain in each year since 1979 was as follows:

Machine Tool Manufacturing Sector
Great Britain

Activity heading 3221 (SIC80) June	*Thousands*
1979	37·6
1980	37·0
1981	32·4
1982	30·3
1983	26·4
1984	23·3
1985	24·1
1986	23·9
1987	23·1
1988	23·8
1989	24·0
1990	23·5

Notes:
1. Similar estimates are not available for Northern Ireland or for people other than employees in employment.
2. Estimates at this level of industrial detail are subject to substantial estimation error.

Government policy towards the machine tool manufacturing industry, as for industry as a whole, is to set the framework for free and fair competition and the encouragement of enterprise. A range of Government schemes for encouraging enterprise and spreading best practice is available to companies in the industry.

Motor Cars

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he is seeking any changes in the current EC regime governing the trade in motor cars,

including those of partly Japanese origin, between the member states in which they are manufactured; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 26 November 1990]:* The Government are participating in discussions about the European Commission's proposals for the eventual abolition of restrictions on imports of vehicles from Japan. We are adamant that there must be no link between any continuing ceilings set for imports from Japan and the treatment of cars made in the EC by Japanese-owned companies. Such cars are European and must continue to be allowed unlimited free circulation throughout the EC. I believe that this has now been accepted by other member states and by the Commission. I will inform the House of the outcome of the discussions when agreement has been reached.

SCOTLAND

River Esk (Licences)

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what arrangements he has made to ensure that the National Rivers Authority does not seek to collect individual rod licence fees from Scottish anglers fishing in tributaries of the Esk in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Border Esk and its tributaries in Scotland have been subject to English fisheries legislation and administration since at least 1865. The implementation and enforcement of those provisions —including rod licence duties—is now a matter for the National Rivers Authority (NRA). I understand that the NRA is keen to allow sufficient time for consultation and agreement on the way forward and that, to this end, no charges will be made for 1991.

Football Grounds

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland which grounds used by clubs in the Scottish football league are, according to information available to him, owned by local authorities.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Four clubs in the Scottish football league play at grounds owned by local authorities. The grounds are:

(1) Meadowbank stadium, home of Meadowbank Thistle, owned by Edinburgh district council.
(2) Stair park, home of Stranraer, owned by Wigtown district council.
(3) Annfield park, home of Stirling Albion, owned by Stirling district council.
(4) Shielfield park, home of Berwick Rangers, owned by Northumberland county council.

School Meals

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the results of the annual census of school meals in Scotland held in January; and what were the corresponding 1989 results.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is set out in the table. Despite a decrease in the number of pupils present on census day, the number of pupils taking school meals has risen. This reaffirms the Government view that changes in entitlement to free meals would not affect the overall uptake of meals. Free meals formed 30 per cent. of the total meals provided and the number taking their own food increased by just over 1 per cent. Cafeteria-style meals remain popular and their uptake has risen from 64 per cent. to 69 per cent. of all meals taken: there was a corresponding 5 per cent. drop in the uptake of the traditional two-course fixed meal.

Education Authority Schools (Including Nursery and Special Schools)

	1990		*1989*	
	Number	*As a percentage of pupils present*	*Number*	*As a percentage of pupils present*
Pupils present on census day	704,357	—	713,034	—
Pupils taking school meals				
—on payment	230,410	32·7	223,456	31·3
—free	99,303	14·1	105,232	14·8
—total	329,713	46·8	328,688	46·1
Pupils bringing own food on school premises	110,290	15·7	104,266	14·6

A detailed statement of the returns from education authorities from which these national figures are derived is being placed in the Library.

The following table shows, as a percentage of pupils attending their respective sectors, those primary and secondary pupils taking meals or bringing their own food.

	1990 (per cent.)	*1989 (per cent.)*
Primary		
Pupils taking school meals	52·7	51·5
Pupils bringing own food	23·7	22·2
Secondary		
Pupils taking school meals	42·2	42·1
Pupils bringing own food	5·4	5·3

All authorities provide the traditional two-course meals and cafeteria-style meals, with the latter accounting for 69·1 per cent. of all meals served in 1990.

The figures are as follows:

	Pupils taking fixed meals	*Pupils taking cafeteria meals*
1989		
Paid	74,345	149,111
Free	44,327	60,905
Total	118,672	210,016
Percentage of pupils present	16·6	29·5
1990		
Paid	71,819	158,591
Free	30,019	69,284
Total	101,838	227,875
Percentage of pupils present	14·5	32·4

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Romania

23. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the progress of reform in Romania.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Romania has made some progress on democratric reform since the grave setback in June. We

are also encouraged by the start of economic reform. However, we urge the Romanian Government to press ahead with further moves to transform Romania into a genuine free-market democracy.

32. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received about consular assistance to British couples wishing to adopt Romanian orphans; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have received a number of representations on this subject. We are committed to offering whatever assistance we can to British couples wishing to adopt Romanian children.

Cambodia

24. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent reports Her Majesty's Government have received about the military situation in Cambodia.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Information about the military situation in Cambodia is limited. The rainy season usually curtails military operations from September to November. We understand that the resistance coalition is conducting hit-and-run guerrilla operations well inside Cambodia.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many letters, cards, messages and phone calls his Department has received on Cambodia since 8 October.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Since 8 October, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office has received about 2,500 written communications and a small number of telephone inquiries about Cambodia.

Iraq

25. **Mr. Flannery:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any contacts of any kind with his opposite number in Iraq.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The British ambassador in Baghdad is in contact with the Iraqi Foreign Ministry and our views are regularly made clear to the Iraqi ambassador in London.

NATO

26. **Mr. Paice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what his objectives are for the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in December.

36. **Mr. Moss:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what his objectives are for the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in December.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The NATO summit in London this summer set in hand a wide-ranging review to adapt the alliance to the new circumstances in Europe. We plan to take stock with our NATO colleagues of the progress made and to underline the essential role that NATO will continue to play in defence of western interests.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the investigations being conducted by other NATO Governments into allegations of the existence of an undercover military organisation linked to NATO.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We do not comment on investigations being conducted by other Governments.

Intergovernmental Conference

27. **Mr. Favell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the forthcoming intergovernmental conference.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Two intergovernmental conferences will be launched on 15 December, one on economic and monetary union, the other on "political union". The United Kingdom will play a full and constructive part in both, as my right hon. Friend the then Prime Minister made clear in her statement to the House on 30 October.

Middle East

28. **Sir Hal Miller:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what future security and political structure he envisages in the middle east after the restoration of an independent Kuwait.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Once this crisis has been satisfactorily resolved, it must be primarily for the countries of the region to decide what security structures can best ensure their long-term peace and stability. But we stand prepared to play our part in that process.

India

29. **Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next plans to meet the Prime Minister of India to discuss United Kingdom-Indian relations.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has no plans at present to meet the Prime Minister of India.

Poland

31. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he is taking to assist United Kingdom citizens who were born in Poland to return to Poland.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: British citizens of Polish extraction are free to return to Poland if they wish. There are no schemes to help with the cost of returning and we have no plans to introduce one.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on relations between the United Kingdom and Poland.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have close and friendly relations with Poland. We were delighted to welcome Prime Minister Mazowiecki to the United Kingdom in February. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs himself visited Poland at the end of April and many other Cabinet Ministers have done so, too. We admire the courage with

which the Polish Government are tackling their economic problems and will continue to give substantial help to ease the smooth transition to democracy and a market-based economy.

The Gulf

34. **Dr. Thomas:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met the United States Secretary of State to discuss the situation in the Gulf.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs last met Mr. Baker in Paris on 18 November. Our views on the handling of all aspects of the Gulf crisis remain identical.

35. **Mr. Cran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the latest estimate he has as to the number of British citizens still being held captive in Iraq and Kuwait.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Our latest estimates of British nationals detained at strategic sites are 341 for Iraq. There are no British nationals detained at strategic sites in Kuwait, though two are detained at an hotel in Kuwait. The estimates for the total numbers of Britons in those countries are 741 and 477 respectively.

Sri Lanka

37. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much aid is now being provided to Sri Lanka; and what was the comparable figure for 1987.

Mrs. Chalker: Gross bilateral United Kingdom aid to Sri Lanka in 1989 totalled £23·5 million. The comparable figure for 1987 was £18·7 million. The amounts break down as follows:

£ million

	1987	*1989*
CDC Investment	7·1	3·1
Debt Relief	1·6	1·6
Aid and Trade Provision	5·3	4·2
Technical Co-operation	4·7	8·2
Capital Aid	—	6·4

Gross bilateral aid in 1990 is expected to be of the order of £13 million excluding CDC investment.

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received about the involvement of Sri Lankan security forces in extra-judicial killings in that country.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have received many representations, both from hon. Members and from members of the public, expressing deep concern. We have frequently made it clear to the Sri Lankan Government that their security forces must maintain the highest respect for human rights.

European Commission (British Employees)

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what further progress he has made towards increasing the number of British citizens employed in the European Commission.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given by my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State, Privy Council Office to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field) on 29 October. The response to the European fast-stream scheme is encouraging but such measures inevitably require some time to take full effect.

Single European Act

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his written answer to the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East on 22 November, *Official Report*, column *200*, under which legally binding authorities the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office signed the Single European Act treaty at the meetings he refers to.

Mr. Garel-Jones: My right hon. Friend the then Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the Member for Wallasey (Mrs. Chalker), signed the Single European Act at the plenipotentiary meetings in Luxembourg on 17 February 1986 and The Hague on 28 February 1986 under general full powers authorised by Her Majesty the Queen.

EC Political Union

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with other EEC Foreign Ministers on moves towards political union.

Mr. Hurd: I and other EC Foreign Ministers attended the European Council in Rome on 27-28 October, which discussed the preparations for the intergovernmental conference on political union. My right hon. Friend the then Prime Minister reported on those discussions to this House on 30 October.

Vietnamese Boat People

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the number of Vietnamese boat people currently being held in detention in Hong Kong.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: On 24 November there were 52,716 Vietnamese boat people in Hong Kong of whom 8,447 have refugee status and are accommodated in open centres. The remaining 44,269 are held in detention.

WALES

School Nurses

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many secondary schools there are in each local education authority area in Wales; and how many are served by officially appointed school nurses.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The information as at September 1989 is shown in the table:

	Number of secondary schools	Number of schools served by a nurse
Clwyd	33	29
Dyfed	31	16
Gwent	34	16
Gwynedd	23	5
Mid Glamorgan	42	12
Powys	13	1
South Glamorgan	28	27
West Glamorgan	27	26

Rents

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has on the effect the policy of linking rent levels in Wales as a whole to property valuations had on council rents in each district and borough council area, on a weekly basis.

Mr. Grist: Implied capital values are used in the distribution of the real part of the increase in guideline rents for subsidy purposes. It is for each authority to set its own rents having regard to its legal obligations.

For each district, guideline rent increases for the current year, including an allowance for inflation, are shown in the table:

District	Guideline rent increase 1990-91 £s per week
Alyn and Deeside	1·87
Colwyn	1·08
Delyn	1·10
Glyndwr	1·37
Rhuddlan	1·87
Wrexham Maelor	1·85
Carmarthen	1·40
Ceredigion	2·10
Dinefwr	1·58
Llanelli	1·06
Preseli/Pembrokeshire	2·37
South Pembrokeshire	2·23
Blaenau Gwent	1·25
Islwyn	1·37
Monmouth	2·85
Newport	1·81
Torfaen	1·40
Aberconwy	1·10
Arfon	1·12
Dwyfor	1·54
Meirionnydd	1·06
Ynys Mon	1·10
Cynon Valley	1·15
Merthyr Tydfil	1·06
Ogwr	1·29
Rhondda	1·33
Rhymney Valley	1·25
Taff Ely	1·13
Brecknock	1·96
Montgomeryshire	1·75
Radnorshire	1·94
Cardiff	1·54
Vale of Glamorgan	3·17
Lliw Valley	1·17
Neath	1·08
Port Talbot	1·12
Swansea	1·60

Teacher Training

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish figures showing the intake at each teacher training establishment in Wales for each year since 1975, together with the numbers who qualified as teachers from each establishment during the same period.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Information is not available for all years requested. The information held is as follows:

Colleges of higher education

Intake[1]	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90
NEWI	147	159	113	95	77	50	83	104	160
Trinity	66	147	208	189	184	204	205	255	277
Gwent	204	172	198	146	152	149	154	151	187
Bangor	140	182	200	163	120	151	155	169	222
Music and Drama	6	17	17	19	13	8	21	10	13
Cardiff Institute	156	208	197	197	205	213	252	258	259
West Glamorgan Institute	138	86	110	104	99	65	80	105	136
Total	857	971	1,043	913	850	840	950	1,052	1,254

[1] Includes the intake to B Ed. courses, postgraduate teacher training courses and from 1981-82 to 1987-88 Dip HE courses, most of whom progressed to a B Ed. course. A small number of students on Dip HE who progress to a BA qualification are included for all years.

Successful Students[1]	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89
NEWI	41	62	57	46
Trinity	75	121	124	125
Gwent	80	105	85	131
Bangor	77	105	83	93
Music and Drama[2]	—	—	—	—
Cardiff Institute	206	216	237	215
West Glamorgan Institute	58	69	81	67
Total	537	678	667	677

[1] Care must be taken in interpreting the relationship between the numbers of successful students and the size of the intake. Owing to the varying lengths of teacher training courses, students who start a course in a given year will not all complete their course at the same time.

[2] Students attend Cardiff Institute for the final year (teacher training component) of their course.

University Departments of Education (All establishments)

	PGCE intake	Successful students
1978-79	635	576
1979-80	650	624
1980-81	718	688
1981-82	754	718

	PGCE intake	Successful students
1982-83	618	573
1983-84	670	600
1984-85	633	573
1985-86	568	511
1986-87	572	493
1987-88	604	525
1988-89	636	501

University data supplied by the Universities Council for the Education of Teachers.

National Rivers Authority

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy that his Department will reimburse fully, no later than the following financial year, all levies paid by county councils in Wales to the National Rivers Authority for flood defence work; and if he will publish a definition of the pass-through arrangement which is applicable in such circumstances.

Mr. Grist: In Wales, levies from the National Rivers Authority are taken into account in calculating standard spending assessments for Welsh county councils. These assessments are based upon the use of formulae agreed with the Welsh local authority associations. Central Government support for local authority revenue expenditure (which includes meeting National Rivers Authority levies) is distributed on the basis of those assessments and is unhypothecated. Arrangements in England are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will estimate the amount and percentage of community charge not paid in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: I am confident that the approach to collection adopted by Welsh charging authorities is both professional and effective and I am sure that the overwhelming majority of people will pay their community charges. I shall be seeking data about collection from authorities at the end of this financial year when the full picture for the year will be available.

Manufacturing Industry

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many manufacturing jobs have been lost in Wales since May 1979 up to the latest availabe date, giving the reply for each year.

Mr. David Hunt: Comprehensive information regarding jobs lost is not available.

Upland Farmers

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what urgent action he proposes to help upland farmers in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: Measures already introduced for general application, such as improved intervention support for beef and early advance payments of sheep annual premium, will help all farmers. LFA producers will additionally benefit from the enhanced suckler cow premium—which has been increased for 1991 to £51·69, the maximum permitted under EC rules—and from a supplement of 4 ecu (currently worth £3·12) to the sheep annual premium from the 1991 marketing year.

Teachers

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what measures he proposes to improve teacher morale in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I am conscious of the pressures teachers face in this period of change. Managing change is never easy, but we have taken positive steps to minimise the burden and to allow teachers more time to adjust to the pace of change. I believe that our reforms will support teachers in their work.

For example, the national curriculum will give teachers clear objectives, and local management will give schools greater flexibility as to how these objectives are achieved. As the independent interim advisory committee noted, in the medium and longer term there should be substantial gains in the self-confidence of teachers as the new arrangements are successfully introduced, and increases in their job satisfaction as the educational benefits of the changes start to be realised in practice.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales which teacher unions he has met; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I met representatives of the NAS/UWT (Wales) on 7 September. Both my right hon. Friend and I are always willing to consider requests from the teacher unions for a meeting.

Parent Teacher Association

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he last met the Parent Teacher Association.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I last met the Parent Teacher Association of Wales in November 1987 when I addressed the annual general meeting of the association.

Schools (Ministerial Visits)

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the schools in Wales which he has visited.

Sir Wyn Roberts: My right hon. Friend visited Pen-y-Dre high school, Mid Glamorgan on 19 October 1990. Since March 1990 I have visited six county primary schools, one special school and four county secondary schools in Wales. These are listed in the table:

		Date
Cwmffrwdoer County Primary School	Gwent	2 March 1990
Oakdale Secondary School	Gwent	2 March 1990
Catwg County Primary School	West Glamorgan	3 April 1990
Ysgol Pendalar (Special School)	Gwynedd	27 April 1990
Ysgol Brynrefail (Secondary)	Gwynedd	27 April 1990
Irfon Valley County Primary School	Powys	18 May 1990

		Date
Newtown Secondary School	Powys	18 May 1990
Taliesin Junior School	Clwyd	11 June 1990
St. David's High School	Clwyd	11 June 1990
St. Giles Junior School	Clwyd	11 September 1990
Prendergast Junior School	Dyfed	2 October 1990

NHS Trusts

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales by what date he aims to accept or reject the proposals that Pembrokeshire health authority be constituted as a national health service trust.

Mr. Grist: The outcome will depend on whether the authority is invited to prepare a formal application for NHS trust status following consideration of its expression of interest.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Rented Land

Mr. Gill: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action he proposes to take to improve the availability of agricultural land to rent.

Mr. Gummer: I believe the tenanted sector is an important element in a healthy agricultural industry, but it is clear that the current legislation is hindering the supply of land to rent. In our discussions with the main interested organisations all have recognised the need for change. I therefore intend to issue a consultative paper in the new year with a view to securing a lasting and effective change without prejudice to the position of existing tenants.

Market Regulation

Mr. Gill: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will give details of expenditure in 1989-90 and 1990-91 by the intervention board executive agency and the Agriculture Departments on market regulation under the common agricultural policy.

Mr. Curry: Details are given in the table of the outturn for 1989-90 and the latest forecast of outturn for 1990-91.

	£ million 1989-90 (Actual Outturn)	£ million 1990-91 (Forecast Outturn)
(i) Expenditure by the Intervention Board—Executive Agency		
Cereals	120·6	274·4
Oilseeds	187·0	211·0
Sugar	104·0	109·0
Beef and Veal	63·8	364·7
Sheepmeat	78·6	56·0
Pigmeat	2·6	6·3
Milk Products	92·9	200·0
Processed Goods	38·5	45·3
Others	46·7	49·9
Total	734·7	1,316·6
(ii) Expenditure by the Agriculture Departments		
Repayment of cereals levies	24·2	22·8
Suckler Cow Premium Scheme	61·8	70·8
Annual Premium on Ewes	114·9	189·3
Payments to producers giving up some milk production	65·2	59·7
Beef Special Premium Scheme (Northern Ireland)	11·6	5·8
Total	277·7	348·4
Grand Total	1,012·4	1,665·0

Some of the expenditure shown above benefits consumers and trade interests rather than United Kingdom producers.

The figures for the Intervention Board-Executive Agency are net of various receipts treated as negative expenditure. Receipts from levies on the production and storage of sugar and isoglucose and on third country exports, which are regarded as Community Own Resources, are excluded.

Of the estimated outturn for 1990-91, £1,501 million is expected to be financed from the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF); in 1989-90, £1,137 million was thus financed. However, because the United Kingdom is a net contributor to the European Community budget, the whole of this expenditure is attributable to the Exchequer. Receipts from the European Community do not always relate to expenditure in the period.

Grants and Subsidies

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will give details of expenditure in 1989-90 and 1990-91 by the Agriculture Departments on agricultural grants and subsidies excluding market regulation under the common agricultural policy.

Mr. Curry: Details are given in the following table of the outturn for 1989-90 and the latest forecast of outturn for 1990-91.

	£ million 1989-90 (Actual outturn)	£ million 1990-91 (Forecast outturn)
Price guarantees		
Potatoes	—	—
Wool	2·9	22·0
Assistance to the egg industry	0·1	—
Total	3·0	22·0
Support for capital and other improvements		
Farm and conservation grant scheme (EC)	0·4	4·8
Agriculture improvement scheme (EC)	24·0	18·7
Agriculture and horticulture development scheme	15·1	12·3
Farm structures	0·3	0·2
Agriculture and horticulture grant scheme	0·1	—
Agriculture improvement scheme (National)	7·2	1·3
Northern Ireland agricultural development programme	2·6	4·3
Farm woodland scheme	0·3	1·3
Farm and conservation grant scheme (National)	11·5	31·6
Guidance premiums	0·3	0·1
Farm accounts	0·2	0·2
Environmentally sensitive areas	8·6	10·6
Total	70·4	85·4

	£ million 1989-90 (Actual outturn)	1990-91 (Forecast outturn)
Support for agriculture in special areas		
Hill livestock compensatory allowances	122·4	127·6
Additional benefit under AHDS, NIADP, AHGS, AIS(EC), AIS (National), FCGS (EC) and FCGS (National)	20·1	19·6
Others	8·1	7·0
TOTAL	150·6	154·2
Other payments		
Set-aside scheme	9·8	21·6
Milk outgoers scheme	4·7	0·7
Crofting building grants and loans (net)	2·7	3·2
Sheep compensation scheme 1986	0·4	0·3
Storm damage recovery scheme 1987	0·1	—
Cooperation grants	1·2	1·7
Farm diversification:		
Capital grants	2·3	4·2
Marketing and feasibility grants	—	0·4
Pilot nitrate sensitive areas scheme	—	0·3
Other	0·2	0·4
TOTAL	21·4	32·8
GRAND TOTAL	245·4	294·4

Some of this expenditure attracts contributions from the European Community. These are mainly received in the following year. In 1990-91, £60 million is expected to be received from the fund compared with £53 million in 1989-90.

The individual figures may not add up to the totals shown due to roundings.

Agriculture Council

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the outcome of the Agriculture Council held in Brussels on 27 November.

Mr. Curry: I represented the United Kingdom at this meeting of the Council.

Agreement was reached on a number of useful measures including one fixing maximum levels for pesticide residues in certain fruit and vegetables, one dealing with the health implications of the marketing of farmed game, one amending the Community regime for olive oil to take account of the gradual application of the full Community regime to Spain and Portugal and one specifying details for the second stage of the accession of Portugal to the full CAP regime.

Agreement was also reached on a Council directive laying down veterinary rules for the processing of animal waste. This provides specifically for the continuation of the traditional United Kingdom knacker industry until at least 1995 and keeps open the possibility of the trade continuing, under conditions to be determined, beyond that date.

Food Labelling

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agricult Fisheries and Food when he proposes to implement European directive on nutrition labelling; and what nutritional information will be available to Br consumers.

Mr. Maclean: The provisions of the directive broadly similar to the United Kingdom nutriti labelling guidelines issued in 1987 and the directive's r impact will, therefore, be to give further impetus to provision of nutrition information on food labels w will be of great benefit to consumers.

I am encouraging manufacturers and retailers to a the main provisions of the new directive at once an particular to give full nutritional information, at energy, protein, carbohydrate, sugars, fat, saturates, and sodium. Some changes to the Food Labe Regulations will be needed to achieve full implementa and draft amending regulations will be published comment as soon as possible.

Salmonella

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agricult Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy investigate and identify the cause of infection in each of salmonella enteritidis which leads to the compul slaughter of poultry.

Mr. Maclean: Because of the nature of the salmo organism and the many routes through which infectio a flock can occur it would not be possible in most cas identify the origin of the infection. Detailed investiga of individual cases is therefore unlikely to be an effe use of resources.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agricult Fisheries and Food if he has any evidence environmental factors such as low lime status influenc incidence of bovine spongiform encephalopathy; whether he is sponsoring any appropriate research.

Mr. Maclean: The most likely cause of bo spongiform encephalopathy was the feeding of meat bonemeal which included material derived from scra infected sheep and subsequently from bovine spongif encephalopathy-infected cattle. The feeding of rumin derived animal protein to ruminants has been banned s July 1988. A wide range of other possible factors has considered in the continuing epidemiological study o disease, but there is no evidence that any environme factors have influenced its incidence.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agricult Fisheries and Food what information he has on meas adopted in the Republic of Ireland to ensure potent bovine spongiform encephalopathy-infected material f cattle does not enter the human food chain in the Un Kingdom.

Mr. Maclean: The Republic of Ireland operat compulsory slaughter policy in which all cattle suspe of having bovine spongiform encephalopathy slaughtered and destroyed. As the incidence of cli

bovine spongiform encephalopathy in the Republic is negligible, the view of the scientific veterinary committee of the European Community is that further measures are not necessary.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what regulations apply to the import into the United Kingdom of bovine offal which would be subject to the Bovine Offal Prohibition Regulations (1989) if originating in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Maclean: The Imported Food Regulations and the Importation of Animal Products and Poultry Products Order 1980, as amended.

Fertilisers

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he has any plans to modify the fertiliser regulations to cover any products sold to growers which make feeding claims;

(2) if he has any plans to introduce standards and labelling of products sold as soil improvers.

Mr. Maclean: Soil improvers and products which make feeding claims are covered by general legislation on the sale and trading of goods, which is the responsibility of the Department of Trade and Industry.

Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the result of the laboratory test for spongiform encephalopathy carried out on the antelope calf which died at London zoo on 12 November.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what investigations he is carrying out, and what consultations he has had with London zoo, to determine the type of transmission of spongiform encephalopathy in the kudu antelope which died there recently; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The state veterinary service is in close touch with London zoo about the kudu which died on 13 November. The animal's brain has been removed for laboratory examination at the central veterinary laboratory to determine whether it had a spongiform encephalopathy. The results will be made available when the examination is completed.

Bananas

Mr. O'Hara: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps are being taken for the protection after 1992 of the small-scale banana farmers of the Caribbean.

Mr. Curry: Until the European Commission puts forward a proposal for the banana market post-1992, specific steps to protect small-scale Caribbean banana farmers cannot be decided upon. Her Majesty's Government continue to work for effective preferential arrangements for bananas from the United Kingdom's traditional suppliers in the context of the single European market.

DEFENCE

Nuclear Tests

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all nuclear weapons tests carried out by his Department since 1979.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The following nuclear weapons tests have been carried out jointly with the United States since 1979:

Test	*Date*
Nessel	29 August 1979
Colwick	26 August 1980
Dutchess	24 October 1980
Serpa	17 December 1980
Rousanne	12 November 1981
Gibne	25 April 1982
Armada	22 April 1983
Mundo	1 May 1984
Egmont	9 December 1984
Kinibito	5 December 1985
Darwin	25 June 1986
Midland	16 July 1987
Barnwell	8 December 1989
Houston	14 November 1990

RAF Bases, Germany

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) where No. 60 Squadron will be moved to after the closure of RAF Wildenrath;

(2) what is the proposed date for closure of *(a)* RAF Gutersloh and *(b)* RAF Wildenrath;

(3) where *(a)* 3 Squadron, *(b)* 4 Squadron, *(c)* 18 Squadron and *(d)* 230 Squadron, will be moved after the closure of RAF Gutersloh.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I have nothing to add at this stage to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Newark (Mr. Alexander) on 13 November 1990, *Official Report*, column *122*.

Operation Granby

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether full accident investigations will be carried out on aircraft that are lost or damaged in accidents while operating in support of Operation Granby.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Yes, where practicable.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all accidents involving British military aircraft operating in support of Operation Granby.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There have been two such accidents:

18 October 1990: RAF Tornado at Tabuk, Saudi Arabia.

13 November 1990: RAF Jaguar in the desert in Saudi Arabia.

Military Exercise (Soviet Inspection)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the inspection of a military exercise by Soviet officials in the United Kingdom in September this year; what was the name of this exercise; and how many military personnel were involved.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Soviet Union conducted an inspection under the terms of the document of the

Stockholm conference on confidence and security building measures in Europe in the United Kingdom from 26 to 28 September 1990. Under the terms of this document any of the 35 participating states has the right to conduct inspections on the territory of any participating state within the whole of Europe. The purpose of such inspections is to clarify doubts about compliance with the agreed measures.

The area designated for inspection by the Soviets was bounded by Holmer point, Hove, St. Catherines point, Portland Bill and Chepstow (some 12,000 sq m). Almost exactly the same area was designated by the Soviets in 1988 for the purposes of the only other inspection that has been conducted in the United Kingdom to date.

There was no significant exercise activity taking place within the designated area. The maximum number of troops on exercise within the area on any day was around 4,000.

The inspection successfully demonstrated to the Soviets the United Kingdom's continued compliance with the terms of the document.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many Soviet inspectors participated in the inspection of a British military exercise in September; what sites were visited; and what was the cost of this inspection to Her Majesty's Government.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Four Soviet inspectors participated in the inspection. They were accommodated at Bulford and they visited the following sites:

Salisbury Plain Training Area
Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst
Ash Ranges, Surrey
Longmoor Training Area, Hampshire
Browndown Training Area, Hampshire
School of Signals, Blandford
HQ United Kingdom Land Forces, Wilton
RAF Middle Wallop
Bovington Training Area, Dorset
Long Valley Training Area, Hampshire
Army Apprentices College, Chepstow.

The cost of the inspection is not available. Inspections are not centrally funded and costs, for the most part, lie where they fall. Costs encompass such areas as accommodation, transport, provisions and staff costs of the accompanying interpreters and escorts.

Greenham Common

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will make a statement on the future use of RAF Greenham Common;

(2) when he expects the 501 Tactical Missile Wing at RAF Greenham Common to be deactivated.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) on 6 February 1990, columns *591-92*.

RAF Leuchars

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what facilities exist at RAF Leuchars for support of F15 aircraft of the United States air force based at NAS Keflavik, Iceland.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No facilities have been constructed at RAF Leuchars for the particular use of USAF F15 aircraft.

WE177

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for D what year the WE177 achieved operational statu the Royal Air Force and (ii) the Royal Navy.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The WE177 free-fall bomb first entered service with the RAF in 1966 the Royal Navy in 1971.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for what was the development cost of the WE177.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It has been the p successive Governments not to reveal details nature.

INF Treaty

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for D he will list the inspections carried out by inspect the Soviet Union at RAF Greenham Common a Molesworth under the intermediate nuclear force

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The INF treaty inc stringent, mandatory and effective verification involving data exchanges, on-site inspection an peded surveillance by national intelligence measu four elements of the verification regime that a United Kingdom are as follows:

(a) initial "baseline" inspections, which took the first three months of the operation of th to verify the date exchanges;
(b) short-notice inspections of declared missil ing bases and support facilities, with a quota of 20 such inspections for each side i three years;
(c) "close-out" inspections of the operating b support facilities which have been decomm
(d) short-notice inspections of formerly decla for a period of 10 years after the eliminati missiles.

To date, the Soviets have conducted eig inspections during five visits to the United Kingd details are as follows:

19-22 August 1988
"Baseline" inspections at RAF Greenham C and RAF Molesworth.
30 October—2 November 1988
Short notice inspection at Molesworth.
18-20 January 1989
"Close-out" inspection at Molesworth, sho inspection at Greenham Common.
16-18 August 1989
Short notice inspection at Greenham Commo
23-25 May 1990
Short notice inspections at both Greenham C and Molesworth.

RAF St. Mawgan

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for what is the role and function of the propos maritime communications centre at RAF St. Ma

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Membe answer I gave my hon. Friend the Member for C North (Mr. Neale) on 25 July 1990, column *301*.

Phantom Aircraft Squadrons

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for whether any decision has been made on what to the Phantom aircraft of Nos. 19 and 92 squ following the disbanding of those squadrons.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No decision has yet been taken.

Chemical Weapons

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his Department's latest assessment of the size of the Soviet Union's stockpile of chemical weapons, in terms of quantity of chemical agents.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We continue to assess that the Soviet stockpile of chemical warfare agents is several times greater than the figure of 50,000 tonnes declared by the Soviets themselves in 1987.

Nuclear Weapons

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which beryllium compounds are used in the United Kingdom's nuclear weapons programme.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Beryllium in metallic form is used at the atomic weapons establishment sites at Aldermaston, Cardiff and Burghfield.

RAF Molesworth

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the future use of RAF Molesworth.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-West (Sir A. Grant) on 11 January 1990, at column *691*.

NATO

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the use of undercover organisations by NATO.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is not the Government's practice to comment on such questions.

Armoured Vehicles

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether any additional orders have been placed with Vickers plc for the supply of spare parts for Challenger tanks as a result of the deployment of forces to the Gulf.

Mr. Alan Clark: Yes.

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether any additional orders have been placed with GKN plc for the supply of spare parts for Warrior armoured vehicles as a result of the deployment of forces to the Gulf.

Mr. Alan Clark: Orders already in the pipeline with GKN for the support of Warrior armoured vehicles have been brought forward as a result of the deployment of forces to the Gulf.

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the operational availability of armoured vehicles deployed with the 7 Armoured Brigade has been increased or reduced since their deployment to the Gulf.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The armoured vehicles deployed with the 7 Armoured Brigade underwent a programme of modification to improve their performance in harsh desert conditions. We are satisfied with the resultant operational availability.

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he plans to improve the operational availability of armoured vehicles deployed with the 4 Armoured Brigade once they have been moved to the Gulf.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The armoured vehicles that will deploy with 4 Brigade will be modified on arrival in the Gulf to ensure that operational availability is maintained in the harsh desert environment.

British Army of the Rhine

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the operational availability of those forces deployed with the British Army of the Rhine which will not be deployed to the Gulf has declined or increased since 16 September.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The decision to increase our ground forces in the Gulf to divisional strength will have some adverse effect upon the availability of the remaining forces in Germany. Our NATO allies are aware of the planned deployments.

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the present number of *(a)* infantry battalions, *(b)* armoured regiments and *(c)* artillery regiments deployed with the British Army of the Rhine.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The information requested is as follows:

	Number
(a) Infantry Battalions	10
(b) Armoured Regiments	11
(c) Artillery Regiments	9

These figures exclude units that have already deployed to the Gulf or are earmarked to do so.

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the supply of spare parts for Challenger tanks and Warrior vehicles currently deployed with the British Army of the Rhine has altered as a result of the deployment of the 7 Armoured Brigade to the Gulf.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The units deployed to the Gulf from BAOR took their vehicles and a full scale of spares with them. Additional spares have also been supplied as necessary, with some consequential effects on the spares position in BAOR.

The Gulf

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what approximate number of reservists will be required for the deployment of further troops in the Gulf announced on 22 November.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The number of reservists required as a consequence of deployments to the Gulf will depend on the results of detailed planning, which has yet to be completed.

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the nature of the skills that will be required from reservists as a result of the deployment of further troops in the Gulf announced on 22 November.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence made clear when making his announcement on 22 November, we will particularly need members of the reserve with medical experience or training.

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he anticipates sending further forces to the Gulf in addition to the deployment announced on 22 November.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The military situation in the Gulf is kept under constant review. The deployment of further British forces in due course is not ruled out.

Attack Helicopter

Mr. Mans: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has yet reached a decision on the choice of new attack helicopter for the Army.

Mr. Alan Clark: As previously announced, we have participated along with three other European nations in joint studies of the feasibility of developing a light attack helicopter (LAH) based on the Agusta A129 design.

Although these studies have demonstrated the feasibility of such a development, unfortunately, and despite the best efforts of all parties involved, it appears that development of a solution that would meet the requirements of all four nations would not be economic. Additionally, as a result of international developments since the studies were initiated, including the CFE agreement, the number of aircraft required by some nations has reduced below the level at which a collaborative A129-LAH would be economically viable, and the Governments concerned have decided not to proceed with a LAH development.

We are continuing to evaluate other options for meeting the British Army's requirement for a new attack helicopter, but it is likely to be some time before I am able to announce our conclusions.

HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION

Ibbs Report

Sir Geoffrey Howe: To ask the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, representing the House of Commons Commission, what is the response of the Commission to the report by Sir Robin Ibbs on House of Commons services; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Beith: On 21 May Sir Robin Ibbs was invited by the House of Commons Commission to undertake a review of the management and decision-taking structures of the House. The report of the team led by Sir Robin was presented to the Commission on 29 October and was further considered by the Commission last week. It was published today in full as House of Commons paper 38.

The Commission is grateful to Sir Robin and his colleagues for reporting so promptly on the complex issues referred to them and for their constructive recommendations. The Commission welcomes the proposals in the report as providing a coherent framework for the evolution of the management, financial control and decision-making structures of the House establishment of a single budget for House of services under the Commission's control.

Many detailed issues remain to be res Commission expects, however, to take steps next few months towards implementing the p the report, in co-operation with and subject to with the other bodies involved.

Meanwhile, the Commission will welcome from Members, the staff of the House and ot should be addressed in the first instance to the the Commission.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

"House of Cards"

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Lord Presi Council what facilities in the Palace of Westm made available to the makers of the drama se of Cards".

Mr. MacGregor *[holding answer 23 Novemb* understand representatives from the drama se of Cards" were admitted to the Palace in orde impression of the interior with a view to c appropriate sets or obtaining locations elsewh

EMPLOYMENT

Action for Jobs

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary o Employment how much of the expenditure o advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* outdo ing, *(d)* regional campaigns, *(e)* exhibition m research and *(g)* presentations for action 1986-87 was spent through the Central Information.

Mr. Jackson: All the expenditure on press radio advertising, outdoor advertising and r action for jobs in 1986-87 was spent through Office of Information. Expenditure on actio presentations and exhibition material in 1986- placed through the Central Office of Informa was no expenditure on regional campaigns fo jobs in 1986-87.

Careers Service

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of Employment whether he has any plans to t whole or any part of the careers service to loca companies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson *[holding answer 27 November* arrangements for careers guidance are cu subject of an internal review. The review te presenting its recommendations shortly. A situation for local enterprise companies, responsibility of my right hon. and learned Secretary of State for Scotland.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he has any plans to privatise the whole or parts of the careers service now provided by local education authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson *[holding answer 27 November 1990]:* As the hon. Member is aware, on 25 July this year, a feasibility study was announced to consider options for the future of the careers and occupational information centre (COIC), including options for transferring it to the private sector. The results of this study as well as that of the careers guidance review are due out soon.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 29 November 1990

HOME DEPARTMENT

Police Complaints

Mr. Sedgemore: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many complaints against the police in England and Wales, including the Metropolitan police, were completed, whether formally or informally, in each of the last four years for which figures are available; of those how many were substantiated and how many were unsubstantiated; how many were informally resolved and how many were withdrawn or not proceeded with; and of those complaints that were substantiated, how many resulted in criminal charges being brought, how many resulted in disciplinary charges being brought and how many resulted in advice being given.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Information relating to the numbers of complaints completed, and how many of these were substantiated, unsubstantiated, informally resolved and withdrawn or not proceeded with, are given in the annual reports of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary, for all forces in England and Wales other than the Metropolitan police. Figures are also given in the reports in relation to complaints which resulted in criminal charges, disciplinary charges, or were dealt with by other means.

The annual reports of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis show corresponding figures up to and including the year 1987. Information in relation to complaints substantiated, unsubstantiated, informally resolved and withdrawn or not proceeded with is not given in the Commissioner's reports for 1988 and 1989 owing to a change of format, and is as follows:

	1988	*1989*
Substantiated	184	103
Unsubstantiated	2,308	1,906
Informally resolved	1,121	1,207
Withdrawn or not proceeded with (including those where dispensations were granted by the Police Complaints Authority or which were trivial or ill-founded)	3,321	3,657
TOTAL	6,934	6,873

Copies of all these reports can be found in the Library.

Mr. Sedgemore: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list separately for each of the last four years for which figures are available the number of charges of which officers in England and Wales were convicted arising from *(a)* complaints and *(b)* other information in each of the offence groups (i) violence against the person, (ii) sexual offences, (iii) burglary, (iv) robbery, (v) theft and handling stolen goods, (vi) fraud and forgery, (vii) criminal damage, (viii) pe corruption, (x) other indictable offences, (xi) as other offences (not traffic) and (xiii) traffic offe

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Information relating to th of officers convicted of criminal offences, to w investigation arose from a complaint or fr circumstances, and whether the charge was in r traffic offence or a non-traffic offence, is annually in the reports of Her Majesty's Chief In Constabulary, for all forces in England and W than the Metropolitan police, and of the Comm Police of the Metropolis. More detailed informa types of offences involved is not available.

Mr. Sedgemore: To ask the Secretary of St Home Department if he will list for each year the number of complaints against the police co England and Wales in which racially disc behaviour was alleged; how many of th substantiated and how many were unsubstanti many were informally resolved; of those substantiated, how many resulted in a disciplin being preferred; what was the outcome of such c if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The available informa follows:

Number of complaints

	1985	*1986*	*1987*	*1*
Recorded[1]	83	197	180	
Formally investigated	57	142	131	
Substantiated	0	4	4	
Unsubstantiated	57	138	127	

[1] Does not include complaints which were r subsequently withdrawn.

Information relating to any subsequent d proceedings or to the number of complaints resolved is not held centrally, and could be obt at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Sedgemore: To ask the Secretary of St Home Department if he will list all those author maintain bodies of constables, other th authorities, which have concluded agreement Police Complaints Authority for the establi procedures corresponding to those established of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 he has approved, pursuant to section 96 of tha if he will list separately those authorities whic bodies of constables which have not concl agreements.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Agreements under section 1984 Act have been approved in respect of the Defence police, the British transport police, Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority police, t London Authority police and Port of Liverp There are 22 other private police forces of w aware which do not have such agreements.

The 22 forces—the list is not exhaustiv follows:

Port of Bristol Police
Dover Harbour Board Police
Falmouth Dock Police
Port of Felixstowe Police
Manchester Dock Police

Milford Docks Police
Tees and Hartlepool Port Authority Police
Great Yarmouth Port and Haven Commissions River Inspectorate
Royal Parks Constabulary
Royal Botanic Gardens Constabulary
Birmingham Parks Patrol
City of Manchester Recreational Services Departmental Police
Barnet Dog Handlers
Wirral Parks Police
Brighton Parks Police
Brent Parks Police
Wandsworth Parks Constabulary
Merseyside Passenger Transport Authority, Mersey Tunnels Law Enforcement
Tower of London Yeoman Warders
Cambridge University Constables
Oxford University Constables
Epping Forest Rangers

Mr. Sedgemore: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list for each year from 1985 the numbers of Metropolitan police officers who were charged with disciplinary offences following a successful civil action against the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis for a wrongful act by an officer; and, in respect of each charge, whether the offence was proved and what punishment was imposed.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: This information is not kept nationally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Sedgemore: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list separately for each of the last four years for which figures are available the number of police officers in England and Wales who *(a)* resigned after criminal charges had been preferred against them but before such proceedings were completed, *(b)* resigned after disciplinary charges had been preferred against them but before such proceedings had been completed, *(c)* were under suspension at the time of their resignation and *(d)* resigned while under investigation for disciplinary matters.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Information relating to the numbers of officers who resigned after disciplinary criminal charges had been preferred against them but before the proceedings had been completed, the numbers of officers who resigned while under investigation, and the number of officers who were permitted to resign while under suspension, are given in the annual reports of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary, for all forces in England and Wales other than the Metropolitan police. Equivalent information in relation to Metropolitan police officers is contained in the annual reports of the Commissioner of Police for the Metropolis, except that figures relating to officers who resigned before criminal proceedings against them were completed, or while they were under investigation for criminal matters are available only up to and including the year 1987. The information for later years could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Correspondence

Mr. Kaufman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he intends to reply to the letters to him dated 5 July, 7 September and 19 October from the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton with regard to Mr. Z. Saleem of 5 Argyle avenue, Manchester.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I am sorry that the right hon. Member had not had a reply to his letter. Urgent inquiries are now being made of the entry clearance officer in Islamabad about Mr. Saleem's application. My right hon. Friend will write to the right hon. Member as soon as possible.

Mr. Kaufman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he intends to reply to the letters to him dated 17 July, 7 September and 19 October from the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton with regard to Mrs. Z. Mohammed of 2 Holstone close, Manchester.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I regret that the response has been delayed and my right hon. Friend will reply to the right hon. Member in the very near future.

Seals

Sir Hector Monro: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he intends to provide continuing protection for seals under the Conservation of Seals Act 1970, following the expiry of the two orders laid under section 3(1) in 1988.

Mrs. Rumbold: We have now laid before Parliament the Conservation of Seals (England) Order 1990 which provides permanent close-season protection for both common and grey seals for three years in an area stretching along the North sea coast from the border between England and Scotland to Newhaven on the south coast. This order will come into effect on 19 December, to coincide with the expiry of the orders laid in 1988.

My right hon. and learned Friend the former Secretary of State for Scotland has also laid the Conservation of Seals (Common Seals) (Shetland Islands Area) Order 1990 to provide similar protection for common seals in the Shetland Islands for one year while population surveys are carried out.

Both these orders have been laid following advice from the Natural Environment Research Council. The phocine distemper virus affected principally common seals in the southern part of the North sea. Because of the difficulties in identifying seals in the water, and to reduce the risk of a common seal being shot in mistake for a grey seal, the Conservation of Seals (England) Order 1990 extends to both common and grey seals.

PACE Codes of Practice

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consultations he has held, and from what bodies he has received representations, under section 69 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act or otherwise, in respect of new codes of practice A, B, C and D since those codes were originally published in July; and whether he intends to further modify the codes as a result of these additional consultations or representations.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Since the draft revised codes were laid before Parliament on 9 July, further representations have been received from the Association of Chief Police Officers, the Metropolitan police, the British Deaf Association, members of the Bar and several other individuals, with all of whom there had been discussions or correspondence since the original versions of the draft revised codes were published in August 1989.

In the light of these representations, additional amendments have been made to the text of the draft revised codes. They were re-laid before Parliament on 8 November and now await debate in both Houses.

Sexual Offences

Mr. Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the sexual offences, distinguishing between those committed by men and women, for which the Government propose longer custodial sentences; and what is his policy in respect of imposing longer custodial sentences for non-violent sex offences.

Mr. John Patten: The Government's policy, as set out in paragraph 3.13 of the White Paper "Crime Punishment and Protecting the Public" (Cm. 965 February 1990), is that the Crown court should have the power to give a sentence longer than that justified by the seriousness of the offence but within the maximum prescribed for that offence to a persistent and violent offender, if this is necessary to protect the public from serious harm.

Clause 25(1) of the Criminal Justice Bill defines the sexual offences for which it is proposed that this power should be available. Excluding offences triable only on indictment, which are not subject to the provisions of clause 3 regarding the length of sentence which may be imposed, the offences covered by clause 25(1) are as follows:

Sexual Offences Act 1956
- (1) Intercourse with a girl under 16 (section 6)
- (2) Indecency between men (section 13)
- (3) Indecent assault on a woman (section 14)
- (4) Indecent assault on a man (section 15)
- (5) Permitting a girl under 16 to use premises for intercourse (section 26)
- (6) Solicitation by a man (section 32)

Indecency with Children Act 1960
- (7) Indecent conduct towards young children (section 1)

Sexual Offences Act 1967
- (8) Procuring others to commit homosexual acts (section 4)
- (9) Living on the earnings of a male prostitute (section 5)

Criminal Law Act 1977
- (10) Inciting a girl under 16 to have incestuous sexual intercourse (section 54)

Protection of Children Act 1978
- (11) Offences concerning indecent photographs of children (section 1)

The offences under sections 6, 13 and 32 of the Sexual Offences Act 1956, under section 4 of the Sexual Offences Act 1967 and under section 54 of the Criminal Law Act 1977 may be committed only by a man; the remaining offences may be committed by a person of either sex.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

The Gulf

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the outcome of his most recent discussions with Saudi Arabia on the conditions for military intervention in Kuwait and Iraq.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: King Fahd reaffirmed to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State in September and to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence two weeks ago Saudi Arabia's commitment to achieving unconditional Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait and the return of the legitimate Government. United Kingdom forces were the subject of a statement to the House by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence on 22 November.

Mr. Sherrard Cowper-Coles

Mr. Molyneaux: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will place in the Library a copy of a speech by Mr. Sherrard Cowper-Coles, first secretary at the British embassy in Washington, to the Boston investor responsibility research centre.

Mr. Hurd: The reports of the remarks by the British official at a seminar in Boston on 11 October have selected comments from a briefing which was being given to increase support in the United States for fair employment legislation in Northern Ireland. The official was not speaking from a text.

I regret the offence which has been caused by these remarks. They do not reflect the views of Her Majesty's Government.

Fish Stocks, South Atlantic

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has yet reached agreement with the Government of Argentina for the conservation of fish stocks in the South Atlantic.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Yes: a joint statement on the conservation of fisheries in the south Atlantic ocean was agreed with the Government of Argentina on 28 November and announced by both Governments on that day. Copies of the statement have been placed in the Library of the House.

The joint statement issued under the sovereignty umbrella provides for a temporary total ban on fishing from 26 December 1990 in an area defined in an annex to the statement. It also provides for co-operation between the two Governments in the conservation of fish stocks. We regard the joint statement as an important conservation measure and a welcome development in Anglo-Argentine co-operation.

ENERGY

British Gas

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) how many computer runs to detect multiple share applications for British Gas shares by fuzzy matching and other computerised techniques have been carried out in each year from 1986 to 1989 and in 1990 to date;

(2) what has been the estimated average cost of each computer run to detect multiple share applications for British Gas.

Mr. Wakeham: Work since 1987 has been carried out by the police, not by my department. Information in the form requested is not readily available.

Electricity Privatisation

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what factors determined the price for shares in the regional electricity companies.

Mr. Wakeham: In determining the share price the key factor was the dividend yield to be applied to pro forma dividends disclosed in the prospectus. The offer was priced having regard both to current stock market circumstances and to the fact that the price has to be robust to movements in the stock market up till the start of dealings.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) what consultations he had with the Association of District Councils or the Welsh Association of District Councils regarding profit-sharing arrangements for showrooms previously owned by municipal electricity undertakings and disposed of post-privatisation by the electricity distribution companies;

(2) what consultations he undertook with the Association of District Councils regarding the arrangements for clawback or profit-sharing on electricity distribution company properties, previously owned by municipal electricity undertakings and disposed of for other purposes post-privatisation;

(3) what representations he has received regarding clawback or profit-sharing arrangements with the appropriate local authorities for properties vested in electricity distribution companies, owned by municipal electricity companies before 1948, and disposed of for non-electricity related purposes post-privatisation.

Mr. Wakeham: I have not received any such representations or held such consultations.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy on what date he was first approached by MCA Merchandising regarding the requirement for a licence fee relating to copyright for the advertising campaign for the flotation of the electricity distribution companies.

Mr. Wakeham: Her Majesty's Government have never been approached by MCA Merchandising regarding a licence fee relating to copyright for the advertising for the flotation of the distribution companies. This is a matter between MCA Merchandising and WCRS, the advertising agency.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what recent discussions he has had with the chairmen of National Power and PowerGen regarding the proposed dates for stock market flotation.

Mr. Wakeham: The details of my discussions with the chairmen of National Power and PowerGen are confidential. I intend to float both generating companies next February, subject to market conditions.

Home Insulation

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy, further to his answer of 22 November to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras, *Official Report*, column *178*, if he will place in the Library a copy of the preliminary view of the Energy Action Grants Agency on the scale of insulation and advice which can be undertaken in each locality using grants under the home energy efficiency scheme.

Mr. Wakeham: The provision of information to organisations wishing to be registered as network installers under the home energy efficiency scheme (HEES) is a matter for the Energy Action Grants Agency (EAGA). I have today placed in the Library copies of the information sent by EAGA to all those organisations applying for registration, including the preliminary view taken by EAGA on the broad scale of insulation and advice that network installers might be able to undertake using grants under HEES.

ENVIRONMENT

National Gypsy Council

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much money his Department has allocated to the National Gypsy Council in each year from 1979 to 1989.

Mr. Key: The National Gypsy Council has received funding towards its administration costs from my Department's small grants and special grants programmes since 1978. The amounts of grant have been as follows:

	£
1978-79	6,300
1979-80	6,930
1980-81	7,600
1981-82	9,100
1982-83	12,000
1983-84	12,720
1984-85	13,300
1985-86	13,860
1986-87	14,300
1987-88	14,660
1988-89	14,953
1989-90	14,953

Grants under the special grants programme are given to assist voluntary organisations become established or to carry out specific projects. It is not the intention to provide permanent funding and grants are normally given for a maximum of three years. In the case of the National Gypsy Council, it was felt that their work was sufficiently valuable to warrant a longer period of support, but this is now being progressively withdrawn so that they have the stimulus to become more self-sufficient.

Empty Housing

Mr. Ken Hargreaves: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the most recent figure for local authority housing empty for over one year in England.

Mr. Key: Local authorities report the number of their dwellings which have been empty for over one year in their annual housing investment programme returns—HIP1. The estimated total of such dwellings in England at 1 April 1990 appears in column A188 of "1990 HIP1—Regional Grossing", a copy of which is in the Library.

Mr. Ken Hargreaves: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many private dwellings in England have remained empty for more than 12 months.

Mr. Key: A recent estimate is not available.

Diesel Smoke

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what regulations control the emission of diesel smoke from equipment used on building and construction sites; which agency is responsible for enforcement; and what action has been taken to control such emissions.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Part III of the Public Health Act 1936, to be replaced on 1 January 1991 by the strengthened and improved provisions in part III of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, applies to emissions which could be prejudicial to the health of or a nuisance to people in the vicinity of such equipment. Section 1 of the Clean Air Act 1968 applies to dark smoke emissions from building or construction sites. Local authorities are responsible for taking action under both measures as the need arises. The Health and Safety at Work Act., etc. 1974 and Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations apply to emissions which may be hazardous to the health of workers on building or construction sites: the Health and Safety Executive is responsible for enforcement.

Housing Corporation

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many circulars the Housing Corporation has issued between January and September 1990; and at what cost.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Department does not hold the information requested. I have asked the Housing Corporation to write to my hon. Friend.

Community Charge (Exemption Certificates)

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he intends to review the guidelines issued to general practitioners who sign exemption certificates in respect of the poll tax to seek to achieve greater consistency in interpretation of the current rules.

Mr. Key: Advice was issued to general practitioners by the Department of Health and to local authorities by my Department on 2 July; there is no intention at present to issue any further advice.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will list 20 per cent. of the community charge for each local authority;

(2) if he will list the numbers exempted from paying the community charge due to severe mental impairment by each local authority in England.

Mr. Key: I am arranging for the available information to be placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many pensioners have *(a)* ceased to be eligible for exemption from community charge as a result of SI 1990 No. 462 or *(b)* had to wait for receipt of attendance allowance to fulfil the conditions for exemption from community charge.

Mr. Key: Information is held only on the numbers of people who fall within each exempt group. SI 1990/462 increased the scope of the exemption from the personal community charge for those who are severely mentally impaired by providing that the cause of that condition should be disregarded and amending the list of qualifying conditions. The inclusion of attendance allowance and constant attendance allowance for these purposes, for which entitlement continues beyond pensionable age, meant that the condition that a person should be of pensionable age was no longer required.

London Residuary Body

Mr. Fishburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the reappointments of the members of the London residuary body.

Mr. Key: The following have been reappointed to the London residuary body for the period 1 January 1991 to 31 March 1993 or until the dissolution of the body, whichever is sooner:

Members:
Councillor Sir Peter Bowness, CBE, DL
J Esling
W Mackenzie, OBE
M C Roberts
J Wolkind, CBE

The London residuary body has completed the bulk of its ex-GLC tasks and has already distributed £486 million in capital receipts and £184 million in revenue balances for the benefit of London's chargepayers.

The reappointments reflect my right hon. Friend's confidence in the board's ability to discharge the new tasks which the residuary body assumed on 1 April 1990 on the abolition of ILEA.

Dispatch Services

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to announce the outcome of the sale competition for the Crown Suppliers' vehicle hire business and the interdepartmental dispatch service.

Mr. Portillo: Discussions are continuing on the sale of the Crown Suppliers' vehicle hire and maintenance business. An announcement will be made as soon as possible. There are no acceptable bids for the interdepartmental dispatch service, which will, therefore, be retained in government.

Local Government Economic Development

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has received any representations about the Local Government (Promotion of Economic Development) Regulations 1990; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: The Association of District Councils and a number of individual councils have argued that it would be sufficient if local authorities that are not education authorities consulted their local education authority about the programmes of education and training that they provide for economic development purposes. We have accepted this, and the Department is consulting the local authority associations on draft regulations to replace the current requirement to obtain the consent of the local education authority to those programmes with a requirement to consult the local education authority. The

draft regulations also make it clear that the new economic development power is not intended to change the rules on the disposal of land at less than the best considered reasonably obtainable.

Council House Sales

Mr. Fishburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many dwellings each local authority has sold under the right to buy legislation, or voluntarily, in each year since 1979; and what percentage of the total local authority stock they represent.

Mr. Key: I have placed in the Library two tables giving available information on local authority sales up to June 1990. Table 1 shows year by year information for each authority during the years 1979-80 to 1985-86. Table 2 shows year by year information for each authority since 1985-86 together with cumulative figures since April 1979 and the proportion of their stock sold since April 1979.

Hostels

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much money will be made available for the development of the two direct access hostels in Lambeth and Islington to meet long-term emergency housing needs in north and south London; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I have been asked to reply.

The Resettlement Agency is committed to completing the Camberwell replacement programme including assisting with the funding of a further two direct access hostels. As there have been no viable proposals for these hostels, none of the agency's funding has been allocated for them. Should such proposals be received they will be considered by the chief executive who will weigh them alongside the rest of the agency's replacement priorities.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Crown Prosecution Service

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Attorney-General how many vacancies there are currently in the Crown prosecution service for *(a)* solicitors or barristers and *(b)* other staff.

The Attorney-General: The Crown prosecution service currently has 377 vacancies for solicitors or barristers, with a total of 1,674 being in post. It has 21·5 vacancies for other staff, with 2,753·5 being in post.

TRANSPORT

A6, Higham Ferrers

Mr. Fry: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will consider the installation of a pedestrian crossing on the A6 at the market square, Higham Ferrers.

Mr. Chope: A request for a pelican crossing on the A6 has been received from Higham Ferrers town council and is being considered. A decision is expected by the end of the year.

Railway Electrification

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals British Rail has put to him for extending the electrification of the Hooton to Chester and Helsby railway line.

Mr. McLoughlin: British Rail, together with Cheshire county council and other local councils and the Merseyside passenger transport authority, has proposed that the lines from Hooton to Chester and to Ellesmere Port should be electrified. I am examining this proposal.

Cam Spirit

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether his Department's inspectors are satisfied that the vessel Cam Spirit is suitable for use as a standby vessel for North sea operations.

Mr. McLoughlin: A standby vessel for North sea operations has to be surveyed annually if a certificate of inspection is to be issued to it under a code published by the Department. The Cam Spirit satisfied the requirements of this code when she was last surveyed by a marine surveyor in December 1989. The next survey is due in a few weeks.

THE ARTS

Sound Amplification

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will obtain for his office's library a copy of the recent report produced jointly by the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust and the Arts Council on provision for hard-of-hearing audiences, entitled, "Sound Off".

Mr. Renton: I have already done so. The report is a helpful survey of the provision of sound amplification equipment in London's theatres. It also explains how theatres, cinemas, museums, galleries, libraries and other arts venues can apply to the ADAPT fund. This fund is part funded by the Government and assists in making essential adaptations and providing facilities for people with disabilities.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Minister for the Arts what plans he has to encourage increased provision for sound amplification equipment in theatres, concert halls and opera houses.

Mr. Renton: My aim is for the arts to be accessible to everyone. The Government have given £150,000 to the Carnegie Trust's ADAPT fund for the improvement of facilities for disabled people in arts venues. By use of challenge grants the fund aims to encourage additional and at least equal, financial contributions from local communities. Some of the fund has been used to assist with the installation of sound amplification equipment, and applications are invited for further projects.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Private Investors

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proportion of United Kingdom share capital was held by private investors in each year since 1979.

Mr. Maude: Up-to-date information on the share capital held by private individuals is not yet available. Results from December 1989 survey of share registers conducted by the Central Statistical Office are due to be published in the near future.

Current estimates of the value of ordinary and preference shares held by the personal sector, which consists of individuals resident in the United Kingdom, unincorporated private businesses, sole trader and partnerships, non-profit making bodies serving persons and private trusts are as follows:

UK Ordinary and Preference Shares held by the Personal Sector

End Year	*Market value of shares outstanding of which*		
	Total	*Personal Sector*	*Personal Sector Percentage share*
	(£ billion	*(£ billion)*	
1979	83·5	29·8	35·8
1980	105·7	37·1	35·2
1981	115·6	36·7	31·7
1982	141·5	43·3	30·6
1983	178·3	52·3	29·4
1984	226·6	59·1	26·1
1985	267·2	66·5	24·9
1986	349·9	91·1	26·0
1987	395·8	117·9	29·8
1988	429·0	123·4	28·8
1989	550·0	145·9	26·5

These figures are consistent with those to be published in table 14.5 of the December issue of "Financial Statistics".

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Prosecutions

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will prosecute Charles Church Development, and Torday and Carlisle, Prowting under section 234(3) and (7) and paragraph 5 of schedule 3 to the Companies Act 1985 for failure to specify the recipients of political donations.

Mr. Redwood: In accordance with its usual practice in response to specific allegations of non-compliance with statutory disclosure requirements, my Department will look into this.

Scottish Electricity Industry

Mr. Carrington: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he proposes to exlude from the application of United Kingdom restrictive trade practices legislation the contracts entered into between the successor companies to the Scottish electricity boards for the restructuring of the Scottish electricity industry prior to privatisation.

Mr. Redwood: Scottish Power plc and Scottish Hydro-Electric plc are required by the terms of their licences to enter into certain restructuring contracts, which are designed to give the companies access to a balanced portfolio of generating assets on a long-term basis and to govern the operation of their transmission assets. The Government intend that these contracts should, in view of their fundamental importance to the restructuring of the Scottish electricity supply industry for the purpose of privatisation, be excluded from the ambit of United Kingdom restrictive trade practices legislation. Yesterday, I therefore laid before the House an order made under section 100(2) of the Electricity Act 1989, exempting the contracts from the ambit of the Restrictive Trade Practices Act 1976.

For the future, the Government are proposing to introduce new legislation on restrictive trade practices, in implementation of the proposals outlined in the White Paper "Opening Markets: New Policy on Restrictive Trade Practices"—CM 727—published in July 1989. It is our intention that the exemptions granted to the Scottish restructuring contracts under current restrictive trade practices legislation should be carried forward by means of an exclusion from the proposed prohibition on restrictive agreements. The proposed legislation will be introduced when parliamentary time permits.

Government Contracts

Mr. Ian Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement about the Government contracts preference schemes (GCPS).

Mr. Leigh: The Government contracts preference schemes, which apply in the development areas of Great Britain, and in Northern Ireland, have been little used in recent years. The schemes were introduced in the 1930s, and aim to give opportunities to businesses in those areas to secure public sector contracts if their bids are competitive. In Northern Ireland, though not in Great Britain, a price preference of 5 per cent. has been allowable for goods manufactured in the Province.

In the development of a more open framework of public sector procurement rules within the Community, and in the broader approach to the single market, the Government agree with the EC Commission and other member states that it is inappropriate for public sector procurement contracts to be reserved for businesses in particular areas, even the very limited provisions of the United Kingdom's schemes.

The Government have therefore decided that the contract preference schemes are to be terminated. Applications from businesses to be recorded as eligible under the schemes will not be accepted after close of business on 31 December 1990.

This arrangement provides a short period of notice of termination, and is intended to minimise the effect on businesses which may have prepared, or are preparing, bids and tenders in the expectation that the schemes would be in place. It means that for prospective contracts and invitations first issued by the schemes' participating purchasing organisations on or before 31 December 1990, eligible applicants may continue to use the scheme up to the stage of tender and final contract even when the contract-placing timetables go beyond that date. However, the schemes will not apply in any respect for new prospective contracts or invitations to tender issued after 31 December 1990.

Help for businesses to effectively compete for public procurement contracts is now being offered in a number of ways under European and national programmes. The EC Commission's initiative to help businesses in objective 1 regions prepare for the single market—PRISMA—will be available in Northern Ireland. The Commission is also examining the potential to use existing initiatives more effectively, such as the Euro info centre and business

co-operation networks, and the tenders electronic daily system, as a means of disseminating information on public procurement contracts to smaller companies.

My Department's single market campaign stresses the importance of the European public procurement market and a "Guide to Public Procurement" booklet is being issued widely. Enterprise initiative consultancy support in marketing and other business disciplines will help improve the competitiveness of firms bidding for public contracts, and more widely. Our "Managing into the 90s" programme is also promoting good purchasing practice. In addition, regional and local government development agencies, chambers of commerce and other private sector bodies are increasingly encouraging their member businesses to pay close attention to the opportunities of the public procurement market.

New Businesses

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many new businesses have been set up in Amber Valley since 1979.

Mr. Forth: I have been asked to reply.

Between the end of 1979 and the end of 1989, there were an estimated 3,400 new registrations for VAT in the Amber Valley local authority district. During the same period, there were an estimated 2,700 deregistrations, giving a net increase of 700, or 29 per cent.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Haberdashers' Aske's CTC

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list all amendments and variations from the terms of the model funding agreement for city technology colleges deposited in the Library in 1989, which he now intends to include in the specific agreement to fund a Haberdashers' Aske's city technology college.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend expects to sign a funding agreement with the Haberdashers' Aske's Hatcham College Trust substantially the same in all respects as the revised model agreement placed in the Library on 31 October this year. This supersedes the version placed in the Library last Summer.

Natural Environment Research Council

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science, whether he has received the annual report of the Natural Environment Research Council for 1989-90; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The annual report of the Natural Environment Research Council has been submitted to my right hon. and learned Friend under the requirements of the Science and Technology Act 1965, and a copy is being laid before the House today.

In the year that the Government's White Paper on the environment, "This Common Inheritance" was published, I believe that the council's report amply demonstrates the way it has been able to focus multidisciplinary research on a range of important global, regional and local environmental issues, including:

(a) the uptake of carbon dioxide by the oceans through two studies
the North sea project, from which results indic
the physical uptake of carbon dioxide by the
globally may be less than previously thought,
the biogeochemical ocean flux study—BOFS—
work in the north Atlantic shows that the bi
transfer of carbon dioxide from the surface to
waters is stronger than previously supposed;

(b) the development of diagnostic tests to assess the im
particular pollutants on key marine species, and the
these species as "biological detectives" to monitor the
of pollution for the ecosystem as whole;

(c) the development of new analytical methods for th
of pesticides within river sediment, leading
identification of reservoirs of compounds such as DDT
have remained undetected for more than 20 years;

(d) the development of computer-based models of cha
river quality, required for the effective management o
resources, which the council has also been able to ex

(e) the successful development of efficient meth
reintroducing symbiotic fungi that help trees obtain e
nutriments from the soil, which should increase the su
replanting deforested areas.

(f) geochemical surveys which have helped to highligh
of the United Kingdom where
toxic trace elements, organic compounds or so
for example radon, are present,
or essential elements such as copper are lackin
implications for human, livestock or crop heal

I congratulate the council on these and its many achievements and commend this report to hon. Me

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minist will list his official engagements for Thurs November.

The Prime Minister: This morning I preside meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with mi colleagues and others. In addition to my duties House, I shall be having further meetings later toda evening I shall be attending a long-standing engage the constituency of my hon. Friend the Mem Altrincham and Sale (Sir. F. Montgomery.)

Statements

Q9. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the Prime Minister if make it his policy to make greater use of statement House at 3.30 pm.

The Prime Minister: Ministers make statement appropriate.

The Gulf

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will the ecological consequences of a military option Gulf with President Bush.

The Prime Minister: I have no plans to do so.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Ministe discussions he has had with Saudi Arabia about action against Iraq.

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend the M for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher) discussed the inva Kuwait, including the military aspects, with Kin and other members of the Government of Saudi Ar a number of occasions after 2 August. My rig

Friends the Secretaries of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and for Defence have had similar discussions.

Government Offices and Civil Servants

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Prime Minister what steps he will take to ensure that all relevant rules are followed prohibiting Government offices and civil servants from being used on behalf of any political party by Ministers in his Government; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 28 November 1990]:* No special steps are necessary.

Malaysia

Mrs. Ann Clwyd: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list all visits of Government Ministers or officials to Malaysia, with dates since 1979.

The Prime Minister *[pursuant to the reply, 19 November 1990, c. 3-4.]:*

1988
September—Mr. Hamilton, Minister of State, Defence
1990
March—Mr. Hamilton, Minister of State, Defence
October—Mr. Hamilton, Minister of State, Defence

WALES

School Closures

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many schools in Wales have been closed since 1979, by year and age group.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The information is shown in the following table:

	Nursery	*Infant*	*Junior*	*Primary*	*Secondary*	*Total*
1979	—	4	1	4	2	11
1980	—	5	6	8	3	22
1981	5	17	13	9	—	44
1982	—	13	11	6	5	35
1983	—	14	12	9	7	42
1984	4	4	13	3	2	36
1985	2	7	5	18	—	32
1986	—	1	3	12	[1]5	21
1987	1	3	4	10	6	24
1988	2	3	2	8	3	18
1989	1	6	4	8	2	21
[2]1990	1	8	6	4	1	20
TOTAL	16	95	80	99	36	

[1] Includes 3 county junior comprehensive schools and 1 county senior comprehensive school.
[2] To date.

EC Funds

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether local authorities in Gwynedd, Dyfed and Powys have adequate matching resources to enable them to take up fully the funds available from the European Community under the IOP for those three counties; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: Expected receipts from the European Community are taken into account when setting the level of public expenditure, so that spending is higher than would otherwise be the case. Local authorities within the area of the Dyfed, Gwynedd and Powys national programme of community interest benefit from increased credit approvals and reduced borrowing requirements.

Roads

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many persons are currently employed in the roads division of the Welsh Office; and what was the corresponding number in 1979.

Sir Wyn Roberts: At 1 October 1990, a total of 160·5 staff—excluding central support services staff—were employed in the Welsh Office transport and highways divisions. At 30 September 1979 the equivalent figure was 156·5.

Welsh Language

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will place a copy in the Library of his Department's policy guidelines in relation to the use of the Welsh language in Wales by his Department.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Current policy regarding the use of Welsh in the internal administration of the department is based on the guidelines set out in the Hughes Parry report on the status of the Welsh language. This policy is currently being reviewed in the light of the guidelines prepared by the Welsh Language Board. I will place a copy of any new guidelines in the Library of the House once they have been finalised.

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give details of the total Government expenditure on the promotion and development of the Welsh language in each year since 1985.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Since 1984-85, Government grants for the Welsh language made under section 21 of the Education Act 1980 and under section 26 of the Development of Rural Wales Act 1976 have been:

Year	*Section 21 (local education authorities)*	*Section 21 (other bodies)*	*Section 26*	*Total*
	£	£	£	£
1984-85	626,164	378,537	982,124	1,986,825
1985-86	945,657	372,000	1,103,850	2,421,507
1986-87	989,165	458,890	1,079,700	2,527,755

Year	Section 21 (local education authorities)	Section 21 (other bodies)	Section 26	Total
	£	£	£	£
1987-88	1,075,000	592,025	1,156,163	2,823,188
1988-89	1,118,895	874,956	1,352,136	3,345,987
1989-90	1,320,000	1,348,061	1,639,425	4,307,486
[1]1990-91	1,503,000	2,022,000	2,345,000	5,870,000
Total	7,577,881	6,046,469	9,658,398	23,282,748

Note—[1]Provisional

Care and Repair Schemes

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he is undertaking any initiatives to extend the geographical availability of care and repair schemes in Wales.

Mr. Grist: We are currently considering the future funding of Care and Repair (Wales) which will have responsibility for the further development of new schemes in Wales.

Waste Disposal Sites

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will set up an independent environmental audit of all licensed waste disposal sites in Wales.

Mr. Grist: No. My right hon. Friend will receive from Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution regular reports of audits of each of the waste regulation authorities' operations.

Medical Negligence Claims

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what information his Department holds on successful medical negligence claims made against health authorities in Wales.

Mr. Grist: The legal division of the Welsh Office acts for district health authorities in Wales in relation to medical negligence claims and therefore holds relevant files. Information held by that division is subject to the usual rules of solicitor-client confidentiality. The Department also holds financial information relating to the settlement of any individual claims in excess of £30,000.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report*, for the latest available date, the number of schools that have applied for grant-maintained status in Wales, separately distinguishing primary and secondary schools.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Two schools in Wales have applied for grant-maintained status. Both are secondary schools.

Food Poisoning

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what statutory responsibilities health authorities in Wales have for dealing with an outbreak of food-related disease in the human population.

Mr. Grist: The specific statutory responsibilities duties and powers which are significant in the handling of a food poisoning outbreak are placed upon local auth However, Welsh Office guidance to local authori district councils to ensure that they appoint, as officer for the discharge of functions relating to the of outbreaks of food poisoning, a consult communicable disease control of the district authority.

Cardiff Bay Barrage

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for pursuant to his answer of 21 November, if he will copy of his letter to Roy Stoner, his groun consultant on the Cardiff bay barrage, and the sub correspondence with the chairman of the Card development corporation in the Library.

Mr. David Hunt: No.

Education Vouchers

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of S Wales what is his policy on the use of education v in the schools service in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The Government's current for education—in particular more open enrolm funding following pupil numbers through local m ment of schools—are already securing many objectives of vouchers. These policies extend cho reward good schools.

Private Schools

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of S Wales what was the amount of Government mon to the private schools sectors in Wales, school by in each year since 1979.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I refer the hon. Gentleman reply I gave him on 8 May 1990.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of S Wales which private schools in Wales he has visi

Sir Wyn Roberts: None.

Truancy

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of S Wales if he will give the truancy figures for each of education authorities in Wales for each year sin

Sir Wyn Roberts: The information requested collected centrally.

Nursery Schools

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of S Wales if he proposes to increase local education a funding to enable local education authority cuts in school provision to be restored.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The responsibility for nurser provision lies with local education authorities. Th determine the level of provision in line wi assessment of priorities within the education serv

City Technology Colleges

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of S Wales how many city technology colleges ther Wales; how many are proposed; and if he will statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: None. I am ready to consider any proposals put forward to establish a college.

Historic Buildings

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give details of the total Government expenditure on the upkeep, care and protection of historic buildings and monuments in Wales in each year since 1980.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Expenditure by the Government on historic buildings and monuments in Wales, excluding presentation activities and departmental running costs for Cadw and its predecessors during the years 1980-81 to 1989-90 was as follows.

	£'000
1980-81	1,711
1981-82	2,119
1982-83	2,052
1983-84	2,663
1984-85	3,501
1985-86	3,557
1986-87	3,621
1987-88	4,075
1988-89	4,043
1989-90	5,090

Pembrokeshire Health Authority

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what body will be responsible for procuring health services in Pembrokeshire in the event that he approves the reconstitution of the Pembrokeshire health authority as a national health service trust.

Mr. Grist: This matter will be considered in the light of my right hon. Friend's decision on any formal application for NHS trust status that might be forthcoming.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many jobs in manufacturing in Wales have been lost since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave him on 28 November 1990.

Local Authority Expenditure

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what arrangements he is making for informing Welsh local authorities of their standard spending assessments.

Mr. David Hunt: My officials have today written to Welsh authorities, advising them of their provisional SSAs. I am placing copies of that letter in the Vote Office and in the Library of the House. Final figures will be contained in the distribution report which will be laid before the House shortly.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Farm Wages

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what will be the increase in the national farm wages bill if the requirement to provide income for workers who are sick is shifted from the state to employers.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Under the proposals in the Statutory Sick Pay Bill, which received its Third Reading on 28 November, the amount of statutory sick pay—SSP—which employers can recover from their remittances of national insurance contributions will be set at 80 per cent. instead of 100 per cent. Also, the additional amount—currently 7 per cent.—which employers can get back as compensation for the national insurance contributions payable on SSP itself will end. Subject to parliamentary approval, these changes will operate from 6 April 1991.

My right hon. Friend has also announced reductions in national insurance contributions worth some £250 million to employers to operate from the same date. Although the reductions will apply over the whole range of employers' contributions, they have been particularly weighted towards those employers whose employees are not highly paid.

From April 1991 all the lower rates of contribution payable by employers in respect of employees earning up to £185 per week will be reduced by 0·4 per cent. This will be of particular help to employers of agricultural workers, many of whom earn less than £185 per week.

The precise effect of the combined SSP-national insurance contributions package on the national farm wages bill will depend on the sickness experience and pay levels of the work force, but the contributions reductions that I outlined will go a long way towards reducing any extra costs for employers on SSP and in some cases will completely offset this.

Bearing in mind the contribution reductions explained above and the fact that most spells of SSP are over very quickly—the average spell is three weeks and 90 per cent. are over within eight weeks—the extra costs for employers, particularly small employers, are not expected to be significant.

Tax Benefit Tables

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he expects to publish the 1990 edition of the tax benefit model tables.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Copies will be placed in the Library today.

Residential and Nursing Care

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to the statement made by the Lord President of the Council concerning expenditure on residential and nursing care, *Official Report*, 22 November, column 510, if he will tabulate the total expenditure in this field for the years 1979 and 1989, respectively, together with the breakdown into principal categories of cost, separating capital and revenue expenditure, and distinguishing moneys actually received by sponsoring bodies and other Government expenditure.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The available information is shown in the table:

Numbers and Expenditure—All income support claimants in Residential Care and Nursing Homes

Date	*Numbers of claimants (thousands)*	*Annual equivalent expenditure[1] (nearest £ million)*
December 1979	12	10
December 1980	13	18
December 1981	13	23

Date	Numbers of claimants (thousands)	Annual equivalent expenditure[1] (nearest £ million)
December 1982	16	39
December 1983	26	104
December 1984	42	200
December 1985	70	348
February 1986	90	459
May 1987	117	671
May 1988	147	878
May 1989	176	1,105
May 1990	189	1,270

[1]Total weekly expenditure of supplementary benefit/income support expressed as an annual figure.

Lone Parents

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security further to his oral answer of 19 November, *Official Report*, column 5, about the percentage of mothers who voluntarily give information about the father, whether this refers to lone parents or single mothers who are lone parents and whether he was referring to general information which would enable his Department to pursue an absent father for maintenance.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The figure—about 75 per cent.—is based on information currently available from local offices about income support cases where the child's parents have never been married to each other. Obtaining the name of the father is the first step in pursuing maintenance in these cases.

Community Charge Benefit

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many hospital patients are *(a)* exempted from community charge or *(b)* receiving community charge benefits.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The estimated numbers of hospital patients exempt from community charge in England and Wales are in the table.

	England	Wales
Persons whose sole or main residence is an NHS hospital or NHS nursing home	42,000	3,800
Persons whose sole or main residence is a Residential care home Nursing home Mental nursing home Private hospital Hostel providing a substantial level of care, and also being treated or cared for in such an institution.	321,000	23,800
Total	363,000	27,600

The information for Scotland is not available.

Information on the number of hospital patients receiving community charge benefit is not available.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proportion of the cost to Mid-Devon district council of administering community charge benefit will be reimbursed in 1990-91; and what proportion of that cost will be reimbursed in his Department's plans for 1991-92 and each of the ensuing three years.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The Department directly reimburses 50 per cent. of local authorities' estimated administrative needs through a cash-limited sp the remaining 50 per cent. is taken into accoun authority finance settlements. The specifi distributed between authorities according to agreed with local authority representatives. Mid-Devon's share of the specific grant was £ includes the additional money for the work the capital limit changes announced in Although next year's overall totals have been the distributional formula has yet to be d arrangements for future years will be kept u

Income Support

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of Stat Security what is his policy on the deduction c income support at source.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The Criminal Just before the House includes provision for repayr by weekly deduction from income support cases. The regulations, which are intended to detailed conditions, would maintain the existin overall limit on the amount that can be deduct including fines. This provides a safeguard many deductions being made from benefit.

Spending Power

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of Stat Security if he will publish tables using the used in his answer to the hon. Member fo South-East (Mr. Nellist) on 19 February, *Off* columns *560-64*, but using expenditure and be appropriate for families in Great Britain, tog column showing the extent of the differenc from the April 1988 social security changes.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The tax-benefit m which show the financial position of hypot authority tenants with the head in full-tim unemployed in April and October 1990 are ava Library.

The passage of time, and subsequent cha benefit system, have rendered increasingly any attempt to make hypothetical comparis what people get now and what they might ha a system which was almost universally recogni riddled with anomalies and failing to target h With this in mind, the Government no lon tables making such comparisons.

HEALTH

Addenbrooke's Hospital

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of Stat what representations he has received con provision of staff cover at Addenbrooke Cambridge, on the afternoon of Thursday, 29 when 150 resident nurses and student nurse appear at Cambridge city magistrates court.

Mr. Dorrell: None.

Adoption

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what information he has on the prices charged to prospective adoptive couples for home studies by *(a)* Surrey social services and *(b)* Suffolk social services, in respect of inter-country adoptions;

(2) what advice has been issued by his Department to social services departments on pricing policies for charges for home study visits in respect of inter-country adoptions.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The level of such charges is a matter for local authorities.

Ear Implants

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for Health further to his statement of 4 January, if he will now make a statement about the wider use of the titanium implant technique to prosthesis ears.

Mr. Dorrell: I announced central funding for a cochlear implant programme on 25 June including additional funds for Queen Elizabeth hospital, Birmingham to assist with a programme of NHS provision of bone implanted hearing aids using titanium screws. The pace at which wider use is made of titanium implant techniques is a matter for health authorities to determine in the light of their assessment of local needs, priorities and resources.

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he will be able to make a statement further to that which he made on 4 January, regarding the establishment of a central fund to finance a cochlear implant programme.

Mr. Dorrell: I announced the names of the six hospitals selected to receive central funding for their cochlear implant programmes on 25 June. They are:

Region and Unit	*Funding 1990-91* £
North East Thames	
University College/Royal Ear Hospitals	200,000
Northern	
North Riding Infirmary, Middlesbrough	150,000
North Western	
Manchester Royal Infirmary	160,000
Trent	
Nottingham General Hospital	160,000
Wessex	
South Hants Hospital, Southampton	150,000
West Midlands	
Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Birmingham	150,000

Air Ambulance Services

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he expects his Department will complete its evaluation of air ambulance services; and when he expects the report will be published.

Mr. Dorrell: The evaluation of the Royal London helicopter emergency medical service and the Cornwall first air ambulance service is due to begin early in 1991. The report is expected in autumn 1994.

High-voltage Power Lines

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what advice his Department gives to health authorities on patients suffering from headache, depression, miscarriage, cancer or leukaemia, who are living in the close proximity of high-voltage power lines; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: The National Radiological Protection Board has a statutory duty to advise Government and others on possible hazards to health from all forms of radiation, including non-ionising radiation. Its most recent advice is contained in "Guidance on Exposure to Time-Varying Electromagnetic Fields"—(NRPB-GS11, 1989)—a copy of which is in the Library. This does not advocate any special precautions for people living close to high-voltage power lines. The board has recently undertaken an extensive review of the evidence on possible health consequences of exposure to electromagnetic fields. This will be published shortly and will form the basis of any revision to the guidance.

Health Authority Reports

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish in the *Official Report* a list of the titles, together with a note summarising their purpose, of the reports which his Department receives on a monthly, quarterly and annual basis from both district and general health authorities.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 14 November 1990]:* The Department receives around 100 different regular statistical returns from district and regional health authorities, mostly at the district level. A list of the statistical and financial returns required for 1987-88 and 1988-89 is available in the Library. I will arrange for an updated list for 1989-90 to be placed in the Library shortly.

EMPLOYMENT

Labour Statistics

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will update the information in his reply of 24 July 1989, *Official Report*, columns *481-82*, concerning the change in civilian employment since 1979 in the United Kingdom and European Community Twelve.

Mr. Jackson: Employment estimates are not yet available for many EC countries after 1988. The changes in total civilian employment for the United Kingdom and the EC as a whole between 1979 and 1988 are shown in the table.

Changes in Civilian Employment: 1979 to 1988

	Thousands	*Per cent.*
United Kingdom	525	+2·1
EC12	4,546	+3·7

Source: United Kingdom (ED), Other EC countries OECD Labour Force Statistics 1968-1988.

Unemployment Benefit

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will arrange for the hon. Member for Oldham, West to receive copies of all the answers to parliamentary questions given by the chief executive of the Employment Agency on matters related to the unemployment benefit service.

Mr. Jackson: The arrangements in the Employment Service executive agency for answering parliamentary questions and Members' correspondence are intended to ensure that, following "next steps" principles, hon. and right hon. Members receive replies from the person who is best placed to respond promptly and effectively. If the reply is from the chief executive, it is sent direct to the Member and is copied to the Library of the House and to its Public Information Office. The reply will thus be in the public domain and is available on request.

European Social Fund

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he is now in a position to make proposals about allocations from the European social fund for 1990.

Mr. Forth: My Department indicated in May this year the overall amounts of money likely to be available to the main groups of organisations involved in the European social fund in 1990. The individual organisations subsequently submitted project applications requesting more precise allocations of ESF assistance for 1990. These applications are currently being examined by my Department for approval. Some actual payments have already been made, and it is hoped to complete this process by January.

Work-related Further Education

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the amount allocated by his Department to training and enterprise councils for work-related further education for the coming year and the current year; what was the equivalent for each of the past five years; what steps he has taken to ensure that in future this money will be ring-fenced; and whether such ring fencing will continue for the foreseeable future.

Mr. Jackson: As announced, training and enterprise councils will assume responsibility from 1 April 1991 for payment of funds under my Department's work-related further education programme. A total of £105 million will be allocated to TECs for this in 1991-92. This money is earmarked for the local education authority further education service. In 1991-92 each LEA will receive the same amount of WRFE money as it would have done if my Department had continued to operate the arrangements.

The total expenditure year by year on the work-related further education programme by the Employment Department is as follows:

	£ million
1986-87	110
1987-88	106
1988-89	110
1989-90	102
1990-91	103

Arrangements for the funding of WRFE in future years will be the subject of agreement between the Secretary of State for Education and Science, the Secretary of State for Wales and myself.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Mr. Gerard Slane

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State Ireland when he expects the investigation int of Mr. Gerard Slane to be concluded; and if a statement.

Mr. Cope: This is a matter for the Chief the RUC. However, I understand that pol tions are continuing into the murder of Mr.

Civil Defence

Mr. Bill Michie: To ask the Secretary Northern Ireland how many civil servants employed *(a)* full time and *(b)* part Department on civil defence; what the t employing staff on civil defence duties wer what the total costs of employing staff on duties are expected to be in 1990-91; and wh any plans for these staff to be transferred to v duties.

Mr. Cope: The information requested is

Full-time staff employed on 16 November 1990	
Part-time staff employed on 16 November 1990	
Total cost 1989-90	
Estimated total cost 1990-91	

My right hon. and learned Friend the Ho announced on 16 October that he had initiat the options for the future of civil defence arr England and Wales in the light of east-w When the outcome of that review is implications for Northern Ireland, inclu levels, will be considered.

Kilroot Power Station

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State Ireland if Kilroot II power station is to be c if he will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: Final decisions have yet t the form in which Kilroot II will be comple

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State Ireland what assessment he has made of the consequences to the existing and future employed directly in the power generatio Northern Ireland at Kilroot II if *(a)* it is co other forms of generation are used; and if h statement.

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State Ireland what assessment he has made of the II power station will have on transport jobs Ireland if it is not coal fired; and if he statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: The main objective in pl capacity is to secure the most economic and e

of supply and this will be the primary consideration influencing decisions on the form of Kilroot II. Employment levels at the station will be taken into account in that context. The type of fuel to be used is unlikely to have any implications for jobs in the transport industry in Northern Ireland.

DEFENCE

The Gulf

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his latest estimate of casualties in the event of war in the Gulf; and what medical treatment arrangements have been made.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The number of casualties which might result from any military action could vary considerably depending on a wide range of factors. Contingency plans for the treatment and evacuation of casualties in the event of hostilities continue to be developed. Two field hospitals and other support facilities have already been deployed to the Gulf, and further facilities will be deployed with 1st armoured division.

RAF Macrihanish

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current operational role of RAF Macrihanish; and how many aircraft are customarily based there on permanent and temporary duty.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: RAF Macrihanish is established to support United States navy maritime patrol operations in war. No aircraft are based there permanently in peacetime, although United States navy United Kingdom, and the occasional Royal Netherlands navy aircraft exercise there from time to time.

Nuclear Weapons

Mr. Bill Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on his Department's policy on nuclear weapons testing.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: For the foreseeable future, the United Kingdom's security will depend on deterrence based in part on the possession of nuclear weapons. That will mean a continuing requirement to conduct underground nuclear tests to ensure that our nuclear weapons remain effective and up to date.

RAF Feltwell

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the progress of construction of the proposed deep space tracing station at RAF Feltwell.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Construction of the deep space tracking station at RAF Feltwell is due to be completed in late 1991.

MoD Property, Trowbridge

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what property is owned, leased or controlled by his Department in and around Trowbridge, Wiltshire.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Department's property holdings in Trowbridge consist of three cadet training huts, a garage block and an indoor rifle range. In addition, there are 11 married quarters and a small building plot currently in the process of being sold.

INF Treaty

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what is the timetable for further withdrawals of treaty-limited items from the United Kingdom under the intermediate nuclear forces treaty;

(2) how many of each category of treaty limited items were at (i) RAF Greenham Common and (ii) RAF Molesworth on each reporting date by the intermediate nuclear forces treaty.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The numbers of ground-launched cruise missiles (GLCM) and transporter erector launcher (TEL) vehicles, including spares, at RAF Molesworth and RAF Greenham Common on each reporting date required by the INF treaty are as follows:

	RAF Molesworth		*RAF Greenham Common*	
	Ground-launched cruise missiles	*Transporter erector launcher*	*Ground-launched cruise missiles*	*Transporter erector launcher*
1 June 1988	18	6	100	29
1 December 1988	0	0	100	29
1 June 1989	0	0	100	29
1 December 1989	0	0	52	17
1 June 1990	0	0	52	17

The remaining treaty-limited items at RAF Greenham Common will be withdrawn by 31 May 1991.

Special Safety Course

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the nature and purpose of the RAF special safety study course.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The RAF special safety study period enables participants to study the implications of a nuclear weapon accident and the procedure for responding to this extremely unlikely eventuality.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many Ministry of Defence personnel have attended the RAF special safety study course in each of the last five years.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Records are not held centrally but the following numbers of MDP personnel appear to have attended the RAF special safety study period i each of the last five years:

	Number
1986	0
1987	5
1988	1
1989	0
1990	0

Over-the-horizon Radar

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether his Department will reconsider its plans for the proposed over-the-horizon radar at St. David's and Blakehill if no appropriated funds are available for construction from the United States Government.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: We have at present no reason too believe that the United States Government will not secure appropriated funds for their share of the proposed joint UK-US trial of an over-the-horizon radar in the United Kingdom. The question is therefore hypothetical.

Ulster Defence Regiment

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how often units from the Ulster Defence Regiment make use of training facilities in the mainland United Kingdom.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Ulster Defence Regiment permanent cadre companies carry out about one week's training in Great Britain two years out of three. The part-time element of each UDR battalion carries out about a week's training in Great Britain annually.

Flypasts

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many flypasts by aircraft of the armed services have been carried out in each of the last five years for events not organised by the armed services; what has been the total cost of such flypasts for each year; and from which subheads of which votes funds for these activities are taken.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No central records are held of the number of flypasts conducted by service aircraft during the last five years over events not organised by the armed services, and the information requested could only be provided at disproportionate cost and effort. Flypasts by service aircraft are authorised only if they can be undertaken from within allotted training hours. Any additional non-operational costs arising from a flypast are recovered from the event organiser.

RAF Aircraft

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish a list indicating how many of each type of Royal Air Force aircraft have been delivered to his Department.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The following list details the total deliveries achieved against RAF front line and support aircraft, by type, since 1979 to the end of November 1990.

	Number
Tornado IDS	212
Tornado ADV	138
Harrier GR5/7	67
Phantom	15
Tristar	9
VC10 Tankers	9
BAe 146	2
HS125	6
Hawk	87
Tucano	48
Chinook	41
Puma	8
Sea King	7
Gazelle	13

Cruise Missiles

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many exercises to simulate the dispersal of ground-launched cruise missiles from (i) RAF Greenham Common and (ii) RAF Molesworth were carried out between 1984 and the present date.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Sixty-one such exercises were carried out from RAF Greenham Common and none from RAF Molesworth.

Royal Scots Dragoon Guards

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on his most recent visit to the Royal Scots Dragoon Guards.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My right hon. Friend met members of the Royal Scots Dragoon Guards during his recent visit to the Gulf. They are continuing to uphold the fine traditions of the regiment which will, I am sure, be familiar to the hon. Member.

Chemical Weapons Convention

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on exercises carried out by his Department into the verification of the proposed chemical weapons convention.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Ministry of Defence, in co-operation with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, has recently completed a two-year programme of six practice challenge inspections at Government-owned facilities. The objectives of the practice challenge inspections programme were to test our ability to demonstrate compliance with a chemical weapons convention while at the same time protecting our legitimate national security interests, particularly at sensitive sites, and to draw any useful lessons on challenge inspection for the chemical weapons convention negotiations in Geneva. A paper describing the outcome of the practice challenge inspections programme was tabled at the conference on disarmament in Geneva last July by my right hon. Friend the then Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, and copies are being placed in the Library of the House.

The paper has been widely welcomed as a further positive United Kingdom contribution to the negotiations. The United Kingdom was the first country to embark on practical work on challenge inspection and we are encouraged that others have since followed our example.

SCOTLAND

Gaelic

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give details of the total Government expenditure on the promotion and development of the Gaelic language in each year since 1985.

Mr. Lang: Government expenditure consists of grant aid, under the National Heritage (Scotland) Act 1985, to

bodies which support the Gaelic language and culture and a scheme of specific grants to local authorities for Gaelic education.

The breakdown of expenditure by financial year is as follows:

	Gaelic Bodies	*Specific Grants for Gaelic Education*
	£	£
1985-86	121,000	Nil
1986-87	131,000	250,000
1987-88	179,123	300,000
1988-89	208,000	500,000
1989-90	298,000	850,000
1990-91	305,000	1,200,000

Unit Fines

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he will take to introduce day or unit fines in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The possibility of introducing unit fines in Scotland is being considered by my right hon. Friend as a further contribution to our programme of measures to reduce the unacceptably high level of imprisonment for fine default, but it is too early to announce firm proposals.

Speech Therapists

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received from health boards about problems being experienced in recruiting speech therapists.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: No representations have been received from health boards about this matter, but I am aware that there are some localised recruitment problems.

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what conclusions he has drawn about the availability of speech therapists following the staffing survey of professions allied to medicine; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: A comparison of the manpower planning advisory group's survey of the professions allied to medicine for 31 March 1990 with the same period in 1989 shows that the funded establishment for speech therapists has increased from 386 whole-time equivalents to 400 whole-time equivalents although the staff in post has remained the same. The manpower planning advisory group is to produce a report on speech therapy in the near future and I will give attention to its recommendations.

Roodlands Hospital, Haddington

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what instructions have been given to the Scottish ambulance service about the availability of casualty facilities at Roodlands hospital in Haddington; and if he will make a further statement on the arrangements being made by Lothian health board for accident and emergency services in the Haddington area.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 26 November 1990]:* Lothian health board has asked the chief area ambulance officer for Lothian, Fife and the Borders to operate a policy that ambulances carrying trauma cases in East Lothian are directed to Edinburgh royal infirmary. The board recommends that this should apply to any patient requiring an overnight stay and/or operative intervention.

The health board intends to introduce a treatment service to ensure that minor injuries can continue to be dealt with locally. The board is actively exploring the ways in which this can be achieved.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Food Surpluses

14. **Mr. Wilshire:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has to continue discussions with his fellow European Community Ministers on Community food surpluses and subsidies.

Mr. Gummer: The problems of overproduction will dominate in my discussions with Community colleagues in the coming months.

Common Agricultural Policy

15. **Mr. O'Brien:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about the costs of the common agricultural policy for 1990 and 1991.

Mr. Gummer: Total agricultural expenditure for 1990 is well within budget. Expenditure will increase in 1991.

Productivity

16. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what comparable figures he has for the productivity of farms in Britain, France and Germany.

Mr. Curry: Comprehensive comparisons of productivity are not available. As a broad guide, however, Eurostat figures for 1987 to 1989 suggest that gross value added per labour unit averaged some £12,200 in the United Kingdom compared with £10,700 in France and £10,600 in Germany.

GATT

18. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the progress of the GATT negotiations as they relate to agriculture.

Mr. Gummer: I refer to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) earlier today.

Horticulture

19. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the current levels of Government support for research and development in horticulture.

Mr. Curry: This year the Department will be spending some £13 million on horticulture R and D. A similar sum is planned for 1991-92.

Horses (Exports)

20. **Mr. Bellingham:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent representations he has received regarding the live export of horses and ponies.

Mr. Maclean: We have received a great many letters and petitions from concerned members of the public and from welfare organisations who fear a resumption of exports of horses for slaughter. We intend to reflect this very real depth of public feeling in our negotiations on new Community legislation on the protection of animals during transport.

Farm Incomes

21. **Mr. Colin Shepherd:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he will next meet the president of the National Farmers Union to discuss farm incomes.

Mr. Gummer: I meet the president of the National Farmers union frequently to discuss a wide range of issues.

Uplands Farms

22. **Mr. Maclennan:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proposals he will make to the European Council of Agriculture Ministers to secure the incomes of family farmers in the hills and uplands of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he proposes to take to assist livestock producers in upland areas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: I refer the hon. Gentlemen to the reply I gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Taunton (Mr. Nicholson).

Animal Transport

24. **Mr. Illsley:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he proposes to review the legislation relating to the transport of casualty animals; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: We have accepted recommendations made by the Farm Animal Welfare Council for changes in the legislation on casualty animals to provide additional welfare protection. The necessary order will be made as soon as possible. We are also reviewing the controls on disposal of unfit meat to see whether any changes are needed.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proposals he has to improve conditions for the transport of animals for slaughter.

Mr. Maclean: There are European Community proposals for a Council regulation on the protection of animals during transport. In the negotiations we shall be pressing for the adoption of comprehensive Community rules setting high welfare standards for animals during all stages of transport.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the transportation for export of horses, ponies and other live animals.

Mr. Maclean: There have been no recent discussions i the Community on the Commission proposals for regulation on the protection of animals during transpor The Government will press for the adoption comprehensive Community rules setting high welfa standards during all stages of transport, and for th retention of controls to prevent the export of horses an ponies for slaughter.

Farm Subsidies

25. **Mr. Cran:** To ask the Minister of Agricultur Fisheries and Food what representations he will be makin to the European Community External Relatio Commissioner to uphold the recent agreement on far subsidy reductions at December's GATT talks.

Mr. Gummer: I made my support for the Community offer very clear in the recent Council meetings which Vi President Andriessen attended. I and my right hon. Frien the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry will b attending the ministerial meeting in Brussels next wee which should bring the round to a conclusion, and we wi keep in close contact with Mr. Andriessen.

Clingfilm

26. **Mr. Stern:** To ask the Minister of Agricultur Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on th recommended uses of clingfilm.

Mr. Maclean: A detailed statement was issued in th Food Safety Directorate's information bulletin of 2 November, a copy of which is in the Library of the Hous

Sludge Dumping

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Minister of Agricultur Fisheries and Food what has been the annual tonnage sludge dumping in Liverpool bay and the Bristol chann for each year since 1979.

Mr. Curry: The amounts of sewage sludge deposite each year from 1979 in Liverpool bay and the Brist channel were as follows:

Thousand tonnes (wet weigh

	Liverpool Bay	*Bristol Channel*
1979	1,654	358
1980	1,760	393
1981	1,693	328
1982	1,642	320
1983	1,299	230
1984	1,283	305
1985	1,499	459
1986	1,541	257
1987	1,626	238
1988	1,629	273
1989	1,646	306

Tyrrell Committee

Mr. McAvoy: To ask the Minister of Agricultur Fisheries and Food when the Tyrrell committee last me and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Maclean: The committee last met on 1 Novemb when, among other things, it considered the progress research and slaughterhouse practices.

Farmed Salmon

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he will announce an alternative to the use of Aquaguard in the marine salmon farming industry.

Mr. Maclean: A number of alternative methods for controlling sea lice infestations of farmed salmon are currently being investigated through Government and industry-sponsored research into chemical substitutes for dichlorvos; into vaccines; and into the use of biological controls for sea lice such as the predator species wrasse. These studies are not yet complete.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 30 November 1990

HOME DEPARTMENT

Police Manpower

Mr. Raffan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the latest figures for police manpower and expenditure in each police force in Wales.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I understand from the local authorities concerned that police strength and the expected current expenditure in 1990-91, excluding loan charges, are as set out in the table:

Force	*Police strength*[1]	*Estimated expenditure 1990-91 (£ thousands)*
Dyfed-Powys	935	31,296
Gwent	1,000	33,003
North Wales	1,335	46,196
South Wales	3,124	108,968

[1] As at 31 August 1990.

Registered Homes

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prosecutions and how many convictions there have been under the Registered Homes Act for each year since 1986; and if he will list the sentence for each conviction.

Mr. John Patten: The information requested is given in the table:

Number of prosecutions and convictions under the Registered Homes Act 1984 England and Wales

Year	*Total proceeded against*	*Total convicted*	*Sentence*		
			Absolute discharge	*Conditional discharge*	*Fine*
1986	—	—	—	—	—
1987	6	4	1	—	3
1988	9	7	—	1	6
1989	9	5	—	2	3

Young Offenders

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what was the average period of time spent at Cardiff prison by young people aged *(a)* 15 years and *(b)* 16 years who were remanded in custody in each of the last three years;

(2) what was the average period of time spent at Swansea prison by young people aged *(a)* 15 years and *(b)* 16 years who were remanded in custody in each of the last three years.

Mrs. Rumbold: The information requested is not recorded centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Coroners Court

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the number of coroners courts under his responsibility, with the list of vacancies at each court for members of staff.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Coroners courts are not one of the local authority-based services for which the Home Office provides specific grant contribution. Local authorities are responsible for appointing coroners, paying their salaries and meeting any expenses they incur in carrying out their duties, including staff costs. The information requested is not available centrally.

Ministerial Visit (Leicester)

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the cost of the visit by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary to Leicester on 23 November.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: There was no cost to the Exchequer.

Immigration and Nationality Department

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the income received by the immigration and nationality department for *(a)* naturalisation and *(b)* registration for the last 10 years, including 1990.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Naturalisation fees and registration fees are recorded together. The readily available information, showing receipts net of refunds to unsuccessful applicants, relates to financial years and is as follows:

Financial year	*Receipts (£)*
1980-81	1,184,000
1981-82	1,981,000
1982-83	10,854,000
1983-84	4,795,000
1984-85	2,845,000
1985-86	3,269,000
1986-87	4,241,000
1987-88	14,437,000
1988-89	5,987,000
1989-90	2,573,000
[1]1990	1,127,000

[1] April to October.

Crown Prosecution Service

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he has taken, pursuant to the evidence given by the Director of Public Prosecutions to the Home Affairs Select Committee, concerning the number of police officers obstructing the work of the Crown prosecution service.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The Government's response to the report of the Home Affairs Committee's inquiry into the Crown prosecution service, published on 17 July (Cmnd. No. 1145), suggested that the recently established working

group on pre-trial issues would in due course make proposals for reducing the areas of friction between the police and the Crown prosecution service. The working party has just completed its report and I shall give priority to examining its recommendations, in conjunction with my noble and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor and my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General.

Hillsborough Disaster (Report)

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what consideration was given to including in the Criminal Justice Bill the legislation implementing recommendations contained in Lord Justice Taylor's final report into the Hillsborough disaster, announced by him on 12 November, *Official Report*, column 355;

(2) on what date the decision was taken to implement the recommendations contained in Lord Justice Taylor's final report into the Hillsborough disaster, announced by him on 12 November, *Official Report*, column 355.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Criminal Justice Bill is concerned with the treatment of offenders and the administration of justice rather than the creation of new offences. We decided in October to legislate along the lines which Lord Justice Taylor recommended. We are now considering how the offences should be formulated and will introduce legislative proposals as soon as parliamentary time allows.

Sports Grounds (Safety)

Mr. Fishburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he proposes to publish a revised edition of the "Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds."

Mr. Kenneth Baker: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and I have today published a revised edition of a "Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds" which reflects the recommendations of the Hillsborough inquiry.

I have arranged for copies of the guide, and the Home Office covering circular to local authorities, to be placed in the Library.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

School Governors

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what recent representations he has received about the responsibilities of governors under the local management of schools.

Mr. Fallon: My right hon. and learned Friend continues to receive representations from governing bodies, head teachers, parents and others about the responsibilities of governing bodies under the local management of schools. My right hon. and learned Friend and I are determined to ensure that more resources get down to the school level. It will then be for governors to decide how best to use them. I believe that governors will enjoy the freedom to make their own decisions.

Nursery Education

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give the figures for 1990 for the percentage of under-fives in nursery schools, nursery classes and infant classes by local education authority in England, in rank order.

Mr. Eggar: The information for 1990 is not available.

TRANSPORT

Public Service Vehicles

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State Transport what information his Department holds on number of public service vehicles that fail an roadworthiness tests.

Mr. Freeman: The failure rates of PSVs at annual have been placed in the Library.

The extract is from the vehicle inspectorate execu agency's annual report 1989-90 and shows that:

(a) The average initial failure rate over the last five y is 38·9 per cent.

(b) The average final failure rate over the last five yea 20·7 per cent.

Rayleigh Weir Underpass

Sir Bernard Braine: To ask the Secretary of State Transport what are the reasons for delay on construction of the Rayleigh Weir underpass on the A when the work will now be completed; what steps being taken to minimise the inconvenience caused to l residents; and what steps are being taken to inform advance those most affected of any changes arrangements for access to their homes.

Mr. Chope: Work on the new grade separated junc at Rayleigh Weir began on 4 December 1989 with original proposed completion date of 1 December 1 British Telecom underestimated the time it required divert its cables which has led to a significant delay. new completion date is 9 February 1992.

A liaison officer has been appointed to help co-ordi the statutory undertakers' works and to deal complaints. To keep residents informed, the contra sends out advance notice of works and the liaison of issues letters about statutory undertakers' works.

The situation for residents has been improved by construction of a new service road, the closure of entrance to the industrial estate, the laying of a footpath for access to houses and the provision of a parking area by the main contractor.

Vehicle Clamping

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State Transport if he will make a statement on the steps taking to enforce section 105 of the Road Tr Regulation Act 1984.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I have been asked to reply.

The responsibility for the enforcement of road tr law is a matter for individual chief officers of police.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Angola

Mr. Snape: To ask the Secretary of State for For and Commonwealth Affairs what further measures planned by Her Majesty's Government to assist the U Nations special relief programme for Angola to help the basic survival needs of those most at risk from fam

Mr. Mills: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to increase aid to Angola; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: I refer the hon. Members to the answer which I gave to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) on 27 November at column *356*.

French Guiana

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether Directorate General VIII of the EC is planning to provide aid funds for building roads in French Guiana; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: As it is a French overseas department and not an ACP country French Guiana is not eligible for aid funds from Directorate General VIII.

Commonwealth Development Corporation

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what environmental guidelines exist for the Commonwealth Development Corporation in deciding which projects to support.

Mrs. Chalker: The CDC operates in accordance with environmental policies and procedures which, among other things, require it to:

a. encourage the efficient and sustainable use of environmental resources;
b. seek investment opportunities where sound economic development is coupled with the protection and improvement of environmental resources; and
c. seek ways of safeguarding the welfare of local communities affected by the development projects.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Court of Appeal

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Attorney-General what is the average length of time elapsing between reference of a case to the Court of Appeal and the hearing of that case; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: Since sections 35 and 36 of the Criminal Justice Act 1988 were brought into force on 1 February 1989, I have sought leave to refer 32 cases to the Court of Appeal where I believed the original sentence to be unduly lenient, although I subsequently withdrew eight applications on receipt of further information. To date, 18 of the remaining 24 cases have been determined with an average waiting time of 12·2 weeks. In the same period, I have sought the opinion of the court on a point of law under section 36 of the Criminal Justice Act 1972 in one case which has yet to be determined. The reference was made on 12 September 1990.

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Attorney-General for what reason the appeal of Mr. Danny McNamee was postponed from 12 November to 18 December.

The Attorney-General: The listing of cases in the Court of Appeal criminal division is a matter entirely for the court. I understand, however, that Mr. McNamee's application for leave to appeal against conviction which was listed to be heard by the court on 12 November has been relisted for 17 December as the court was not satisfied that the parties would be fully prepared, following an extension of Mr. McNamee's legal aid to include solicitors, a change in junior counsel, and difficulties in gathering evidence to support the application. Subsequently, those representing Mr. McNamee requested that a further transcript from a related trial be ordered from the court reporting contractor concerned.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Attorney-General if he will ask the Director of Public Prosecutions to take over the case of Dr. Malde Modhwadia of Leicester recently referred to the Court of Appeal by the Secretary of State for the Home Department.

The Attorney-General: The Director of Public Prosecutions will be represented at the hearing in the Court of Appeal of Dr. Modhwadia's case. Counsel will be instructed to advise the Director concerning the prospects of the appeal succeeding.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Benefits System

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when each of the research projects mentioned in his answer to the hon. Member for Fylde (Mr. Jack), on 14 November, *Official Report*, column *180*, is due to be completed.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The table sets out the expected completion date for each project:

Project	*Expected completion date*
1. Effect of the "Actively Seeking Work" provisions	End 1990
2. Survey of incomes in and out of work	End 1992[1]
3. The effect of severe hardship payments for 16 and 17-year-olds	Early 1991
4. Survey of retirement and retirement plans	Late 1991
5. Methods of payment of benefit	Spring 1991
6. The Operation of the Social Fund	Late 1991

[1] This project is partially completed. Results are published in: Survey of Incomes In and Out of Work: Erens, B and Hedges, B (SCPR, 1990) and Garman, A and Redmond, G: The changing characteristics of unemployed men, *Employment Gazette*, September 1990.

Income Support

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what has been the percentage fall over the period since the end of April 1987 in the real value of the income of a person then receiving supplementary benefit and now receiving income support with a transitional addition of £1 per week, assuming no disregarded income and no changes in the transitional addition except those due to the annual benefit upratings.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The level of income support in payment depends upon the individual's circumstances, changes in which may affect benefit entitlement, though not the transitional addition. Any hypothetical calculation of

the kind requested could not reflect the varying positions of the very small number of people who still have transitional protection. Such people remain better off than those in similar circumstances who have claimed income support since April 1988.

Cancer and Leukaemia

Mr. Churchill: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many military personnel and civilians, respectively, have been acknowledged by his Department to have developed various forms of cancer or leukaemia as a consequence of their employment in *(a)* Britain's nuclear test programme, *(b)* Her Majesty's submarines, *(c)* the atomic energy research programme, *(d)* nuclear power generation and *(e)* any other field.

Mr. Scott: The benefit of reasonable doubt has to be given to ex-service men who participated in Britain's nuclear test programme and who have contracted leukaemia (other than chronic lymphatic leukaemia) or multiple myeloma. Sixteen war pensions have been awarded as a result. There has also been one award of war pension for myeloid leukaemia to an ex-service man who served on one of Her Majesty's submarines. The information relating to civilian employees is not available.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Grain Exports

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the availability of Export Credits Guarantee Department support for grain exports to the Soviet Union.

Mr. Sainsbury: Several applications for cover on sales of grain to the USSR are being considered at present by ECGD. Decisions will be reached as soon as possible.

TAURUS

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what assessment he has made of the effect of delays by his Department in changing the Companies Act on companies that wish to register for TAURUS and that have a December year end; and what estimate has been made of the costs involved for such companies;

(2) what are the reasons for the delay in publishing the necessary changes for the implementation of TAURUS;

(3) when his Department first established that there would need to be a change in section 207 of the Companies Act to permit companies to register for TAURUS.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 23 November 1990]:* No changes to section 207 of the Companies Act 1989 are proposed or necessary. The DTI was aware of plans for TAURUS when it drafted section 207: it had to take a general power because TAURUS was not then fully defined. The DTI has been out to consultation on the current TAURUS scheme and is now considering the replies. Regulations using the section 207 power will be put, as planned, to the House for affirmation next year. The regulations will include provisions allowing companies to pass simply drafted resolutions in order to join TAURUS, making it easier, for those who are ready, to do so early in the two-year build-up planned by the international stock exchange. We are working closely with the stock exchange to ensure the regulations are in time for the new system. Recent press reports tha causing delay have been inaccurate.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Oil Imports

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for N Ireland what is the effect on the balance of paymen import of foreign oil into Northern Ireland; and i make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: The balance of payments re trade between the United Kingdom as a whole and of the world. No information is available on the the balance of payments of the import of foreign Northern Ireland.

Nuclear Casualties

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of S Northern Ireland if he will list all the hospitals in N Ireland that have been designated to accept contaminated casualties; and if he will show in hi those hospitals that have expressed an interest in health service trust status.

Dr. Mawhinney: In Northern Ireland the Victoria hospital, Grosvenor road, Belfast is the on hospital designated for the reception of contaminated casualties. The royal group of hospi of management has expressed an interest in trust which the Royal Victoria hospital is a part.

Coal Imports

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for N Ireland what is the present level of coal impo Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statemen

Dr. Mawhinney: In 1989 2,081,000 tonn imported.

Beta-agonists

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of S Northern Ireland if he has any information rel adverse effects on human health resulting from th use of beta-agonists.

Dr. Mawhinney: I am not aware of any adver on human health in this country resulting from th use of beta-agonists. However, I understand national epidemiology centre, Madrid has invest possible link between outbreaks of food poiso Spain and the illicit use of clenbuterol in cattle f

Speech Therapy

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for N Ireland what provision exists or is planned to pro equip a school for special speech therapy for living in Northern Ireland who are unable to spe

Dr. Mawhinney: The following special school a attached to ordinary schools specifically cater for t of children with speech and language problems:

Thornfield Special School—Newtownabbey
Enniskillen Model Primary School—Unit

Gibson Primary School, Omagh—Unit
Killard House Special School, Newtownards—Unit
St. Joseph's Primary School, Bessbrook—Unit

However, any child with such difficulties, placed in any special school or unit because other problems are predominant, will also receive speech therapy.

Provision for pupils with special educational needs is a matter for education and library boards in the first instance. I am not aware of any proposals for further provision.

Bovine Tuberculosis

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many cases of bovine tuberculosis have been notified in the last 12 months in each agricultural office in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Brooke: The number of cattle found to be infected with bovine TB during the period 1 November 1989 to 31 October 1990 are as set out in the table for each divisional veterinary office area.

Divisonal veterinary offices:	*Number of reactor animals*
Armagh	408
Ballymena	269
Coleraine	94
Dungannon	139
Enniskillen	191
Larne	466
Londonderry	59
Newry	1,282
Newtownards	221
Omagh	120
Total	3,249

Glor na Gael

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will reinstate the grant to the Irish language group, Glor na Gael; and if he will make a statement on his reasons for terminating the grant.

Mr. Cope: This matter is now before the courts on an application for judicial review which must be allowed to take its course.

Structural Funds

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what proposals he has received from the European Commission that the Equal Opportunities Commission and the Fair Employment Commission should be represented on the committee monitoring the bids for structural funds in Northern Ireland; and what reply he has sent.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 28 November 1990]:* Recognising that it is for the member state to decide, the European Commission had suggested that the Fair Employment Commission (FEC) and the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) could be represented on committees which monitor the administration of the structural funds in Northern Ireland. We explained that, since monitoring committees are concerned with operational considerations, rather than wider policies such as fair employment, it would not be appropriate for these bodies to be represented. The Commission has accepted this explanation and we have now arranged that it should receive the annual reports of the FEC and EOC.

Irish Language

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give details of the total Government expenditure on the promotion and development of the Irish language in each year since 1985.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 29 November 1990]:* Total Government spending on the Irish language in each of those years was as follows:

	1985-86 £	*1986-87* £	*1987-88* £	*1988-89* £	*1989-90* £
Prison Education	22,294	34,618	29,400	31,582	37,044
Action for Community Employment Programme	64,002	140,830	187,274	290,855	315,175
Belfast Action Team Initiative	—	—	1,000	2,219	89,204
Arts Council for Northern Ireland	2,000	4,000	5,000	5,000	19,000
Central Community Relations Unit	—	—	—	—	88,065
Origin of Placenames Project	—	—	47,230	100,000	121,000
Total	88,296	179,448	269,904	429,656	669,488

It is not possible to disaggregate the cost of provision for the teaching of Irish in schools and colleges of further education in Northern Ireland. Irish-medium education is provided in Bunscoil Phobal Feirste in Belfast and Steelstown primary school in Londonderry. In 1989-90 the running costs for such Irish-medium education were approximately £367,000. Figures for earlier years are not readily available. Capital grants have also been made in the past to the Bunscoil amounting to £443,000. A further allocation of £20,000 has been made available to Bunscoil Phobal Feirste to assist in the development and production of curriculum materials in the Irish language.

Historic Buildings

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give details of the total Government expenditure on the upkeep, care and protection of historic buildings and monuments in Northern Ireland in each year since 1985.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 29 November 1990]:* The information requested is as follows:

	£ thousands
1985-86	2,376
1986-87	2,865
1987-88	2,714

	£ thousands
1988-89	2,727
1989-90	2,772

ENVIRONMENT

Opencast Mines

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will postpone all consideration of opencast coal mining applications until the research recommendations of Roy Waller Associates have been published.

Mr. Atkins: No. Planning applications must be treated on their individual merits and with regard to all material considerations. Mineral planning guidance note 3 on opencast coal mining already recommends that local planning authorities have regard to the environmental, nature conservation, agricultural, landscape, traffic and other effects of a proposal that are relevant to the planning decision. Local authorities are well placed to consider applications and it would be inappropriate to postpone their consideration because of continuing research.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will extend the terms of reference given to Roy Waller Associates to cover the deterimental effects of opencast coal mining on the entire area affected by those operations, including the route used by wagons entering or leaving the site.

Mr. Atkins: No. As I explained in my answer of Friday 16 November, this is a broad-based project which is looking at all the environmental impacts of surface mineral extraction, including the effects of traffic. If information is sparse on any particular issue, the final report of this project will recommend that further detailed research is undertaken.

Football Grounds

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which grounds used by clubs in the English football league are, according to the information available to him, owned by local authorities.

Mr. Atkins: There is no comprehensive information available. I understand, however, that Halifax Town, Hartlepool United, Leeds United, Preston North End and Wolverhampton Wanderers are owned by local authorities.

Local Authority Boundaries

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many letters of complaint his Department has received concerning the abolition of the county of Middlesex.

Mr. Key: Since the beginning of 1987 a total of 77 letters about this matter, 49 of them stereotyped, have been received by the Department.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to receive the report of the local authority boundary commission on Humberside.

Mr. Key: I understand that the commissi issued its draft proposal on Humberside. It pr the districts of Cleethorpes, Glanford, Great G Scunthorpe, should be returned to Lincoln commission also points out that it would be power of the council of the county of Hun change the name to East Yorkshire.

The commission has invited pu comm draft proposal by 31 January 1991. It will reass proposal in the light of all the representatio before deciding whether to then make a report hon. Friend, or to seek further views before s

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary the Environment if, in any examination government structure, he will make it his policy the importance of historical names and bo relation to the vigour and stability of local de

Mr. Key: My right hon. Friend is fully a importance of historical names and boundaries certainly bear them in mind were he to un examination of local government structure.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary the Environment how many letters his Depa received complaining at the setting up and existence of the counties of Avon and Humbe

Mr. Key: Following the Local Governmen Commission for England's report of 30 Novem its review of the county of Avon, the Departm 784 letters of complaint about the continuing the county.

As was recorded in the Department's letter 1989, informing the Local Government Commission for England of the then Secretar direction to it to carry out a further review of of Humberside, nearly 7,000 representatio against the continuance of the county had bee the Department. Since that date such letters ar to the commission in connection with its cur

Victoria Tower

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary the Environment what was *(a)* the cost and *(b* of scaffolding recently erected on the Westminster's Victoria Tower; and if he w statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: A total of £1·5 milli tonnes, respectively.

Southend Council (External Suppo

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of S Environment what was the total of external the Southend-on-Sea district council in 1990- the proposed level of such support in 1991-92; the percentage increase.

Mr. Key: Total external support, consisting support grant, net of contribution to the saf receipts from the non-domestic rate pool, fo on-Sea is £51·5 million in 1990-91. The provis for 1991-92 is £67·4 million, which represents of 31 per cent.

Rents to Mortgages

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what level of interest tenants in Basildon have shown in the proposal for a rents-to-mortgages scheme; and whether he has any plans to extend it to other new towns.

Mr. Key: I have been delighted by the initial response to the pilot scheme in Basildon. Over 900 inquiries from tenants have been received by the New Towns Commission since the announcement of details of the scheme on 23 October. It is now proposed to extend the pilot scheme to Milton Keynes.

Milton Keynes development corporation is in the process of winding up, and is making arrangements to transfer its stock to other landlords. Discussions will therefore begin immediately with Milton Keynes development corporation and the three principal housing associations involved in preparations for the forthcoming ballot on the transfer of the corporation's stock. These are Aldwyck housing association, Jephson Homes housing association and Milton Keynes housing association.

Local Government Finance

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the non-domestic rate poundage increases in Camden between 1979-80 and 1989-90; and if he will show these figures indexed to the retail prices index with 1979-80 = 100.

Mr. Portillo: The information is given in the table:

Camden: Non-domestic rates

	Non-domestic rate poundage[1] *pence*	*Increase on previous year* *per cent.*	*Index relative to the RPI 1979-80 = 100*[2]
1979-80	105·98	—	100·0
1980-81	138·50	30·7	112·4
1981-82	179·60	29·7	130·7
1982-83	192·40	7·1	130·7
1983-84	206·90	7·5	134·3
1984-85	221·20	6·9	136·7
1985-86	227·53	2·9	132·7
1986-87	227·92	0·2	128·9
1987-88	231·74	1·7	126·0
1988-89	230·18	−0·7	118·1
1989-90	229·20	−0·4	109·1

[1] Camden were rate capped in each year from 1985-86 to 1989-90.
[2] Non-domestic rate poundage divided by the Retail Prices Index and indexed to 1979-80 = 100.

Sports Review

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give a full list of those bodies or individuals invited to contribute towards the review of sport; on what date he expects the review to be published; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: My letter of 10 September to the chairman of the Sports Council invited comments from the council, the Sports Council for Wales, the chairmen of the regional councils for sport and recreation, the governing bodies of sport, the British Olympic Association and the Central Council of Physical Recreation. Comments have also been invited by my Department and the Welsh Office from other bodies where an interest has been indicated as listed. We aim to publish a statement of the Government's policies and priorities for sport next summer.

Association of County Councils
Association of Metropolitan Authorities
Association of District Councils
London Boroughs Association
Association of London Authorities
Assembly of Welsh Counties
Council of Welsh Districts
Scottish Sports Association
British Paralympic Association
British Sports Association for the Disabled
United Kingdom Sports Association for People with Mental Handicap
Federation of Sports Association for the Disabled (Wales)
The National Coaching Foundation
Institute of Baths and Recreation Management
Institute of Leisure and Amenity Management
Institute of Sport and Recreation Planning and Management
Chief Leisure Officers Association
National Forum for Coronary Heart Disease Prevention
British Association of Advisers and Lecturers in Physical Education
National Council for Voluntary Youth Services
National Youth Bureau
Youth Clubs United Kingdom
The Physical Education Association
National Council for Schools' Sports
Council for Education and Training in Youth Community Work
British Youth Council
British Council for Physical Education
Equal Opportunities Commission
The National Curriculum Council
Commission for Racial Equality
Business in Sport
CIRCA Leisure PLC
Countryside Commission
Brecon Beacons National Park
Broads Authority
Dartmoor National Park
Lake District Special Planning Board
North York Moors National Park
Northumberland National Park and Countryside Department
Peak Park Joint Planning Board
Pembrokeshire Coast National Park
Snowdonia National Park
Yorkshire Dales National Park
The Commonwealth Games Council for England

Water Authorities

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the names and occupations of all members of water authorities' customer services committees region by region for the last three years.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Before privatisation the former regional water authorities set up consumer consultative committees on an area basis within their territories and were responsible for all appointments, details of which are not available. Under the Water Act 1989 the Director General of Water Services has established 10 customer service committees (CSCs) to represent the interests of customers and potential customers of the 39 appointed companies. The CSC areas correspond broadly with those of the former water authorities. The director general announced on 27 February this year the appointment of chairmen of the CSCs after consultation with the Secretaries of State for Trade and Industry and for Wales as appropriate, and with my Department; and he subsequently appointed a number of members to each

committee. Their names were given in the director general's annual report, which was laid before the House on 19 June and a copy of which is in the Library.

For further personal details I refer the hon. Member to the director general.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which Government guidelines or recommendations preclude industrial consumers from membership of any of the customer services committees connected with the water authorities.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: None.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the criteria applied for membership of customer services committees of regional water authorities.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Under the terms of the Water Act the Director General of Water Services appoints the chairmen of customer service committees after consultation with the Secretary of State, and not fewer than 10 or more than 20 other members to each committee at his discretion. The only criteria laid down are that the director shall have regard to the desirability of persons appointed having experience and capability in some matter relevant to the functions of a water or sewerage undertaker in the committee's area and the inclusion of one or more persons with experience of the needs of the disabled or who may themselves be disabled persons.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give the number of meetings held by each water authority customer services committee for each of the last three years.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Particulars are not available for the consumer consultative committees which were set up by the former regional water authorities. The operation of the customer service committees established under the provisions of the Water Act 1989 is a matter for the Director General of Water Services.

Homelessness

Mr. Janman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the consultation draft of the revised code of guidance to the homelessness legislation will be issued.

Mr. Key: Copies of a revised draft of the code of guidance have today been sent to the local authority associations in England and other groups interested in homelessness, for consultation. Copies have been placed in the Library. A parallel consultation is being undertaken by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales. Responses have been invited by 31 January 1991.

PRIME MINISTER

Security Service Commissioner

Mr. Allason: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make it his policy to publish in full the annual report of the Security Service Commissioner under the terms of the Security Service Act 1989.

The Prime Minister: Subsections 4(6) and 4(7) of the Security Service Act 1989 require me to lay the Security Service Commissioner's annual report b subject to the proviso that any matter wh me, after consultation with the Commis prejudicial to the continued discharge of the service may be excluded.

Cabinet Collective Responsi

Mr. Allen: To ask the Prime Minister taking to strengthen collective Cabinet r

The Prime Minister: None is needed.

Parliamentary Question

Mr. Allen: To ask the Prime Minister category of parliamentary questions whi not to answer.

The Prime Minister: Of those not tra

Management Consultan

Mr. Allen: To ask the Prime Minister studies commissioned inside the Cabinet Minister's offices by management consu during the last week naming the consu subject in each instance.

The Prime Minister: No studies we inside the Cabinet Office and my office consultants and others during the last w

Government Policy

Mr. Allen: To ask the Prime Minister has made to the discussion and im Government policy since assuming offic

The Prime Minister: Government de and will continue to be reached and im basis of collective responsibility.

GCHQ

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Prime Minis it his policy to allow trade unions to or and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The ban on nati at GCHQ remains in force. All GCHQ st the GCHQ Staff Federation, which is union under the terms of the Trade U Relations Act 1974.

Rented Accommodatio

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Prime Government intend to take any measu encourage local authorities to build re tion; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: Implemen Government's housing policies is a ma hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for for Scotland, for Wales and for North Government's view is that greater dive rented housing is desirable, and that associations should be the main p subsidised housing for rent. Substan

planned in public expenditure provision for capital investment by housing associations financed through the Housing Corporation in England; announcements about the distribution of public expenditure provision in Scotland and Wales will be made by the Secretaries of State concerned in the near future. In Northern Ireland district councils have no housing responsibilities; the Northern Ireland Housing Executive is the sole public housing authority.

Concessionary TV Licences

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Prime Minister if the Government will reconsider their policy of opposition to the concessionary television licence being applied to a larger group of pensioners.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Single European Language

Mr. Allen: To ask the Prime Minister what is Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the promotion by the European Community of an officially approved single language throughout Europe.

The Prime Minister: The Government are not aware of any such proposal in the Community. The official languages of the Community (Danish, Dutch, English, French, German, Greek, Italian, Portuguese and Spanish) have equal status under the treaty.

Policy Advisers

Mr. Allen: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list the official policy advisers employed in his office.

The Prime Minister: Those currently employed in my policy unit are Miss C. Sinclair and Mr. J. Mills, both serving civil servants.

Strategic Nuclear Deterrent

Mr. Allen: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make it the policy of Her Majesty's Government to publish an indicative list of circumstances in which Her Majesty's Government would authorise the use of the strategic nuclear deterrent.

The Prime Minister: No.

Correspondence

Mr. Parry: To ask the Prime Minister if he will publish a copy of the letter sent by the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher) to the Roman Catholic archbishop of Baghdad in September.

The Prime Minister: It is not my normal practice to do so.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make it his practice to place in the Library copies of any official correspondence sent to him by any religious leaders.

The Prime Minister: No.

Question Time

Mr. Allen: To ask the Prime Minister if he will bring forward proposals to extend the period of Prime Minister's Question Time to that of the other major Departments of state.

The Prime Minister: The present arrangements were agreed by the House on 18 July 1971. I have no plans to change the period of Prime Minister's Question Time, and any such proposals would best be examined in the first instance by the Procedure Committee.

10 Downing Street

Mr. Allen: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make arrangements for hon. Members to visit No. 10 Downing street.

The Prime Minister: No.

Community Charge

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Prime Minister what changes the Government are proposing to table over the poll tax.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Prime Minister when he expects to start the review of the community charge.

The Prime Minister: Some of the changes announced by my right hon. Friend the then Secretary of State for the Environment on 31 October have still to come through. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment will shortly start a careful review of the community charge.

Taxes

Mr. Allen: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make it his policy to introduce no new taxes before the next election.

The Prime Minister: I cannot anticipate my right hon. Friend's Budget statement, but since 1979 five major taxes have been abolished, and in my 1990 Budget statement I announced that two more—composite rate tax and stamp duty on securities—will be abolished.

Clockwork Orange

Mr. Allen: To ask the Prime Minister if he will institute a full review of project Clockwork Orange.

The Prime Minister: No.

Mr. Charles Powell

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Prime Minister if he intends to retain Mr. Charles Powell in the same position that he has hitherto occupied in the Prime Minister's office; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: Mr. Powell is a civil servant and decisions about his future will be taken in due course in the normal way.

Child Abuse

Mr. Allen: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement on current progress of the inter departmental group on child sexual abuse.

The Prime Minister: Since May 1989 the inter-departmental group on child abuse has met five times. It has made good progress in addressing a wide range of issues in relation to child care, including research and the co-ordination of Government guidance.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Tax and Social Security Fraud

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much money Her Majesty's Government estimate has been lost in the latest year for which comparable figures are available as a result of fraudulent tax claims and fraudulent social security claims; and how many persons have been successfully prosecuted in England and Wales.

Mr. Maude: Reliable estimates are not available of the cost of fraudulent tax or social security claims.

The number of persons successfully prosecuted by the Inland Revenue in respect of false accounts or returns and false claims to personal allowances, deductions for expenses and repayments, in England and Wales in the year 1989-90, is 11.

The number of persons successfully prosecuted by the Department of Social Security for social security fraud in England and Wales in the year 1989-90 is 7,212.

THE ARTS

Blind People (Library Facilities)

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Minister for the Arts what types of public library facilities are available to the blind; and what types of resources are available in Braille, large print and tape.

Mr. Renton: A wide range of public library facilities and resources is available to the blind including fiction books, newspapers and magazines in Braille and Moon; fiction and popular non-fiction books in large print; talking books and newspapers; local history and music cassettes, and guides to services and community information. Cassette players are available for loan or use in many libraries, and Kurzweil reading machines in some. Many library authorities also act as agents for the services provided by national and local organisations. Under the public library development incentive scheme, we are supporting the development of a national daily talking newspaper service by Gateshead Libraries and Arts.

HEALTH

Stillbirth

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he will review the definition of stillbirth in the light of current professional thinking.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The matter is being given careful consideration.

Product Licences

Mr. Churchill: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assurance was given to the court on behalf of his Department during the hearing in June of an application for a judicial review filed by the Natural Medicines Group and the British Herbal Medicines Association, in respect of a review of the new system of fees for product licences; when the review will be completed; and if he will undertake not to increase such fees further until such a review has been completed.

Mr. Dorrell: The court was assured that a full review of the fee structure was in progress, publication of the review proposals was expected shortly and any representations as to the fee structure would be fully considered in the course of the formal consultation following publication.

We now expect that the review will be completed by 1 April 1991.

As was explained in the consultation letter MLX 180 issued to all licence holders by the Medicines Control Agency on 13 September 1990, a copy of which is available in the Library, a further fee increase is considered necessary and is expected to come into operation during December 1990.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the timetable for the establishment of the first group of hospitals with self-governing trust status.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will announce the names of the first NHS trusts shortly. They will become fully operational on 1 April 1991.

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if the Government intend to continue with self-governing hospital trusts.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Yes.

Rampton Hospital

Mr. Ashton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what reasons underlie his proposals to change the conditions of service for nurses in the Prison Officers Association at Rampton hospital, Nottinghamshire; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will make a statement about the reasons for the breakdown of talks with the Prison Officers Association at Rampton hospital, Nottinghamshire; and what he intends to do to restore negotiations.

Mr. Dorrell: There are no current proposals to change the conditions of service for nurses at Rampton hospital though the Special Hospitals Service Authority is proposing to phase out the assisted travel scheme introduced on an ex-gratia basis in the early 1970s. The authority is currently in negotiation with the Prison Officers Association and other staff associations about this.

Mr. Ashton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many of the senior management at Rampton special hospital, Nottinghamshire, will continue to receive company cars or car allowance following the new travel allowance proposals.

Mr. Dorrell: Like other health authorities, the Special Hospitals Service Authority operates a lease car scheme for those staff who undertake sufficient mileage on official duties. It is not restricted to senior managers and is in line with general practice throughout the national health service.

Mr. Ashton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what arrangements he has made for patients at Rampton special hospital, Nottinghamshire, to continue receiving visits from relatives during the Prison Officers Association dispute.

Mr. Dorrell: Industrial action initiated by the Prison Officers Association has, amongst other effects, restricted visiting to patients. Management are doing their best to enable visits to take place whenever practicable.

EMPLOYMENT

Industrial Tribunals

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will make a statement on his proposals for the provision of adequate resources for industrial tribunals in 1991.

Mr. Forth: The budget for 1991-92 has not yet been fixed.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he will extend the jurisdiction of industrial tribunals to deal with wrongful dismissal and other breach of contract claims by dismissed employees.

Mr. Forth: On current plans, the necessary statutory instrument will be laid early next year.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the maximum and what was the average time between the making of a claim to an industrial tribunal and its hearing in the years 1986, 1987, 1988 and 1989 and in the first six months of 1990; and what he expects the average of these to be in the second six months of 1990 and in the first six months of 1991.

Mr. Forth: I regret that the information is not available in the precise form requested. The table shows the percentage of applications coming to first hearing at an industrial tribunal within 12, 16, 20 and 26 weeks, respectively, of receipt of the application.

Percentage

12 months ended	*12 weeks*	*16 weeks*	*20 weeks*	*26 weeks*
England and Wales				
31 December 1985	52	72	82	90
31 March 1987	57	74	85	92
31 March 1988	56	74	83	90
31 March 1989	51	70	81	92
31 March 1990	52	73	82	92
30 September 1990[1]	50	70	83	91
Scotland				
31 December 1985	22	70	88	93
31 March 1987	11	47	75	88
31 March 1988	44	72	83	91
31 March 1989	52	78	87	92
31 March 1990	43	72	85	91
30 September 1990[1]	53	74	87	93

[1] For six months.

It is not our practice to give estimates of future performance of the industrial tribunals.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how much money was allocated to industrial tribunals during the years 1986, 1987, 1988 and 1989 and in the first six months of 1990; and how much he expects the average to be in the second six months of 1990 and in the first six months of 1991.

Mr. Forth: The budget for industrial tribunals for 1991-92 has not yet been fixed. The allocations for the years 1986 to 1990 were as follows:

Year ended	*(£)*
31 March 1986	10,736,000
31 March 1987	11,288,000
31 March 1988	10,834,000
31 March 1989	10,151,000
31 March 1990	10,769,000
31 March 1991	12,223,000

The allocations to the tribunals exclude accommodation costs.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he has made an estimate of the likely increase in the work of industrial tribunals when their jurisdiction is increased so as to include wrongful dismissal and other breach of contract claims by dismissed employees.

Mr. Forth: I do not expect the extension of jurisdiction to result in a significant increase in the work of industrial tribunals.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many cases were dealt with by industrial tribunals in the years 1986, 1987, 1988 and 1989 and in the first six months of 1990; and how many he estimates will be heard by industrial tribunals in the last six months of 1990.

Mr. Forth: The number of cases in which tribunals promulgated decisions, for the years 1986 to 1989 and for the first six months of 1990, is as follows:

12 months ended	*Number*
31 March 1987	39,404
31 March 1988	34,233
31 March 1989	29,317
31 March 1990	31,913
30 September 1990[1]	17,304

[1] For six months.

It is not our practice to give estimates of the number of cases to be heard by the industrial tribunals.

Redundancy Payments

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give details of all new European Community proposals on redundancy payments, with an indication of any timetable for implementation.

Mr. Forth: The Commission's social action programme contains three draft directives on part-time and temporary work, one of which would have the effect of reducing the period for which certain part-time employees have to work for their employers to qualify for the right to a redundancy payment. If adopted the draft directive would need to be implemented by 31 December 1992.

WALES

Surgery

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he intends to establish a regional specialist centre for cataract eye surgery at Morriston hospital, Swansea.

Mr. Grist: My right hon. Friend has no such plans at present.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will specify the target date by which the University hospital of Wales will be performing 800 open heart operations per year.

Mr. Grist: South Glamorgan health authority is expected to complete as soon as practicable the developments which will enable 800 open heart operations to be performed yearly at the University hospital of Wales. Work is presently in hand to enhance cardiac catheter laboratories and intensive care facilities and progress is being regularly monitored.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he intends to announce the location of the second cardiac surgery unit in Wales.

Mr. Grist: Consideration is currently being given to the most appropriate arrangements for a further cardiac facility and we hope to be able to reach a decision in the near future.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what information his Department holds on the number of patients from Wales who receive open heart surgery outside the Principality.

Mr. Grist: Comprehensive information on the number of patients from Wales who receive open heart surgery outside the Principality is not held centrally. However, central funds have been made available to South Glamorgan health authority, which manages the regional cardiac services in Wales, and to Clwyd health authority to enable them to secure additional open heart surgery for patients. I understand that between 1 April and 31 Oc this year 92 patients have been referred to centres ou Wales under these arrangements.

National Rivers Authority

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of Sta Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report (a)* the that an appeal was submitted to him against the cond of discharge imposed by the National Rivers Auth Welsh region on the marine fish farm in Milford H and *(b)* when he intends to announce the result o appeal.

Mr. Grist: An appeal was submitted on 19 Septe 1989. I have instructed our officials to complete urg the work necessary to enable us to determine the ap

Local Government Finance

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of Sta Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report*, for each authority area in Wales, *(a)* the number of indivi who are liable to pay the personal community charg the number of people who are paying the per community charge and *(c)* the number of people wh exempt from paying the personal community ch separately distinguishing the numbers by exem category.

Mr. David Hunt: The number of persons wh subject to pay the personal community charge an number exempt are shown in the tables. Inform relating to the number of persons who are payin personal community charge is not available central

Number of persons exempt from paying the personal community charge[1]

Local authority	*Category of exemption*[2]											
	C1	*C2*	*C3*	*C4*	*C5*	*C6*	*C7*	*C8*	*C9*	*C10*	*C11*	*C12*
Alyn and Deeside	5	0	169	102	32	25	26	463	0	0	0	0
Colwyn	6	0	217	97	9	10	0	1,224	2	0	0	0
Delyn	5	0	213	150	40	50	16	591	0	0	3	1
Glyndwr	4	0	110	170	67	24	149	820	12	0	0	0
Rhuddlan	0	0	191	26	0	12	4	823	1	0	0	0
Wrexham Maelor	41	0	320	454	262	29	38	1,108	2	0	30	150
Carmarthen	2	0	168	190	76	6	254	533	0	0	11	0
Ceredigion	1	0	163	122	72	14	52	523	2	0	0	1
Dinefwr	1	0	146	75	254	0	2	415	48	0	0	0
Llanelli	50	0	246	73	13	6	82	548	0	0	13	0
Preseli Pembrokeshire	6	354	199	11	301	21	19	425	0	0	0	0
South Pembrokeshire	8	76	125	12	323	26	11	466	0	0	0	24
Blaenau Gwent	7	0	228	117	123	0	20	471	0	0	0	3
Islwyn	6	0	197	79	21	4	33	269	1	0	0	0
Monmouth	2	16	163	324	90	11	383	733	1	0	0	0
Newport	48	0	549	571	127	38	287	1,256	0	0	57	48
Torfaen	6	0	302	111	16	51	32	893	0	0	0	0
Aberconwy	23	0	175	80	87	41	244	961	6	0	0	0
Arfon	4	0	193	40	35	4	6	78	0	0	0	1
Dwyfor	1	0	71	36	15	7	9	378	1	0	0	0
Meirionydd	2	0	151	93	38	21	57	286	1	0	0	0
Ynys Môn	10	2	187	200	27	8	8	609	1	0	0	0
Cynon Valley	5	0	209	206	80	0	1	266	0	0	0	0
Merthyr Tydfil	15	0	195	90	15	5	43	364	0	0	0	0
Ogwr	27	0	615	607	141	27	619	956	0	0	0	0
Rhondda	12	3	350	89	28	0	176	321	3	0	0	0
Rhymney Valley	6	0	351	26	13	5	68	361	0	0	0	18
Taff Ely	6	0	226	120	40	2	63	308	1	0	0	0
Brecknock	2	2	95	115	5	15	252	478	0	0	0	0
Montgomeryshire	4	0	171	39	12	10	128	342	0	0	0	0
Radnorshire	2	0	36	30	18	9	25	234	5	0	0	0
Cardiff	448	62	749	151	351	79	48	2,196	18	0	192	0
Vale of Glamorgan	22	0	297	254	180	4	383	1,096	5	0	0	0
Port Talbot	13	0	221	43	54	8	41	294	0	0	0	0
Lliw Valley	6	0	196	130	42	21	63	434	0	0	0	0

Local authority	Category of exemption[2]											
	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	C7	C8	C9	C10	C11	C12	Total
Neath	3	0	108	210	38	7	10	463	0	0	0	0	839
Swansea	47	0	454	252	530	77	180	1,856	0	0	0	0	3,396
TOTAL WALES	856	515	8,756	5,495	3,575	677	3,832	23,842	110	0	306	246	48,210

[1] As at 15 November 1990.
[2] Description of categories:

C1 persons in detention.
C2 members of visiting forces, international headquarters and defence organisations and their adult dependants.
C3 people who are severely mentally impaired.
C4 people aged 18 who attract child benefit because they are still at school (or who would do so if they were not in care).
C5 people aged 18 or 19 and on qualifying full-time courses of further (but not higher) education, who are not included in C4 above.
C6 members of religious communities.
C7 patients whose sole or main residence is in a National Health Service hospital.
C8 people whose sole or main residence is in a residential care home, a nursing home, a mental nursing home, a private hospital or a hostel providing a substantial level of care, and who are also being treated or cared for in such an institution.
C9 residential care workers who are employed at a very low salary.
C10 residents in certain Crown buildings, which have been designated by the Secretary of State.
C11 residents of hostels, night shelters, or other buildings, where conditions prescribed in reg. 58(2) of SI 1989/438 are satisfied.
C12 persons without fixed abodes.

Numbers of persons who are subject to the personal community charge[1]

Local authority	
Alyn and Deeside	55,359
Colwyn	42,714
Delyn	50,852
Glyndwr	31,647
Rhuddlan	44,221
Wrexham Maelor	88,462
Carmarthen	42,537
Ceredigion	53,303
Dinefwr	29,590
Llanelli	57,913
Preseli Pembrokeshire	51,888
South Pembrokeshire	31,135
Blaenau Gwent	58,152
Islwyn	50,567
Monmouth	58,658
Newport	101,455
Torfaen	68,283
Aberconwy	40,867
Arfon	43,134
Dwyfor	20,833
Meirionnydd	25,344
Ynys Mon	51,710
Cynon Valley	49,536
Methyr Tydfil	44,832
Ogwr	101,996
Rhondda	59,902
Rhymney Valley	77,047
Taff Ely	73,445
Brecknock	31,261
Montgomeryshire	40,765
Radnorshire	18,036
Cardiff	218,285
Vale of Glamorgan	84,283
Port Talbot	38,830
Lliw Valley	47,274
Neath	50,117
Swansea	140,255
Total Wales	2,174,488

[1] As at 15 November 1990. Includes persons registered for the personal community charge at the student rate.

Mr. Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he will make a statement in respect of his policy towards the abolition or amendment of the poll tax.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to introduce legislation to abolish the poll tax in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: Important amendments to the community charge have already been announced and will take effect from April 1991. The Government will consider further ways in which the system can be improved.

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list for each local authority the available information as to the numbers of people who *(a)* have or *(b)* have not begun paying the poll tax; the percentages of liable adults that represents; the number of people seriously in arrears; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) on 28 November.

Senile Dementia

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report*, for each health authority for the latest available date, the number of people in Wales suffering from senile dementia, separately distinguishing the age groups *(a)* up to 65 years, *(b)* 65 to 75 years, *(c)* 75 to 80 years, *(d)* 80 to 85 years and *(e)* over 85 years.

Mr. Grist: The number of in-patient and day case deaths and discharges from NHS hospitals in Wales, by district health authority of treatment, with a principal diagnosis of senile and presenile organic psychotic conditions is shown in the following table for 1988.

Deaths and discharges with principal diagnosis of senile and presenile organic psychotic conditions, 1988[1]

	0-65	66-75	76-80	81-85	86+	Not known	All ages
Senile dementia:							
Clwyd	16	76	72	74	103	1	342
East Dyfed	6	82	85	85	82	1	341

	0-65	66-75	76-80	81-85	86+	Not known	All ages
Gwent	11	82	120	108	103	6	430
Gwynedd	7	47	32	58	51	0	195
Mid Glamorgan	22	103	165	133	84	2	509
Powys	3	31	24	38	43	2	141
South Glamorgan	5	92	104	128	94	1	424
West Glamorgan	19	121	137	168	110	1	556
Pembrokeshire	0	3	14	4	5	0	26
Presenile dementia:							
Clwyd	9	4	2	1	0	0	16
East Dyfed	2	1	1	0	0	0	4
Gwent	14	27	12	8	10	0	71
Gwynedd	3	0	2	0	0	0	5
Mid Glamorgan	12	4	1	0	3	0	20
Powys	0	4	1	1	0	0	6
South Glamorgan	14	11	1	4	2	0	32
West Glamorgan	7	16	0	0	0	0	23
Pembrokeshire	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
Other and unspecified:							
Clwyd	4	17	17	9	8	0	55
East Dyfed	6	10	10	4	0	0	30
Gwent	6	42	63	38	25	0	174
Gwynedd	3	14	11	15	10	0	53
Mid Glamorgan	11	41	38	37	26	1	154
Powys	1	5	7	5	0	0	18
South Glamorgan	2	8	16	7	2	0	35
West Glamorgan	8	24	28	30	27	0	117
Pembrokeshire	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

[1] The information may understate the true position in that not all hospitals provide complete clinical details relating to patient disch and deaths.

Roads

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what factors led his Department to reject approaches by Gwynedd county council highways department for the construction of a roundabout on the junction at Bomtnewydd of the A487 and the Caeathro link road; and if he will reconsider this decision.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The junction is on a straight section of trunk road within a speed-restricted area and it has an additional central lane for right-turning traffic. There have been no reports of accidents in the past three years and the layout is considered to be appropriate and adequate for current and future traffic flows.

Meals on Wheels

Mr. Raffan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the latest figure for the number of meals on wheels provided in Wales; and how many were provided in 1979.

Mr. Grist: The information available for meals provided by local authorities and voluntary organisations is shown in the table:

Meals	*1979*	*1990*
At home	1,840,265	2,135,133
Elsewhere[1]	531,946	754,565
Total	2,372,211	2,889,698

[1] Meals served at day centres and clubs (including day centres at residential homes) where the main purpose of the visit to the centre is to receive a meal.

Local Income Tax

Mr. Raffan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wal he will estimate the rate at which a local income ta Wales would have to be set for the current financial in order to raise the same amount as the commu charge.

Mr. David Hunt: Data for any such estimate are available.

Buses

Mr. Raffan: To ask the Secretary of State for W what is the current number of passenger miles travell Wales on buses; what was the comparable figure in th year before deregulation; and if he will express the l figure as a percentage of the former.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Information relating to passe miles travelled in Wales is not held centrally, information on vehicle kilometres and passenger jou for the years requested is given in the table.

Local bus services in Wales[1]

	Passenger journeys	*V kilo*
1985-86	163	
1989-90	153	
1985-86—as a percentage of 1989-90	106·5	

Source: Bus and Coach Statistics Great Britain.

[1] A local service is one available to the general public, passengers pay separate fares and may travel less than 15 miles crow flies. Privately organised services and those run under a by educational or other bodies are excluded.

Pembrokeshire Health Authority

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales in what form he has received an expression of interest from Pembrokeshire health authority in the whole authority becoming a national health service trust.

Mr. Grist: A draft submission and covering letter.

Welsh Water

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will make it his policy to take all steps available to him to persuade Welsh Water plc not to make any change in the water rate system until after the next general election;

(2) if he will make it his policy to take all steps available to him to dissuade Welsh Water plc from introducing a flat-rate charge to replace the water rates.

Mr. Grist: Chapter IV of part II of the Water Act 1989 allows water and sewerage undertakers to determine their methods of charging.

Hospitals (Unauthorised Advertising)

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 22 November, *Official Report*, column *193*, regarding unauthorised advertising in hospitals if he has any knowledge of touting for business on any health authority property other than that at Wrexham by agents for residential and nursing homes.

Mr. Grist: My right hon. Friend has no knowledge of such incidents beyond that which recently occurred at Maelor hospital, Wrexham.

ENERGY

PowerGen

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what restrictions apply in the case of Mr. Malpas, the ex-chairman of PowerGen, with regard to the acceptance by him of directorships in other electricity-related companies.

Mr. Baldry: There are no restrictions. Appointments to the boards of the electricity companies will be a matter for the companies once they have been floated.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what restrictions he applied on the number of staff and advisers to the Hanson Group plc who were to be given access to commercially confidential information in respect of PowerGen; and what measures have been taken to limit any subsequent use of such confidential information.

Mr. Baldry: Under a confidentiality agreement between Hanson plc and my right hon. Friend, access to commercially confidential information relating to PowerGen plc was restricted to named persons within Hanson plc and its advisers. The Government had the right to require that information provided by them or by PowerGen be returned or destroyed. This has now been done. Furthermore, the named persons are not permitted, at any time before 1 April 1993, directly or indirectly, to have any interest in any shares in the capital of PowerGen.

Electricity Privatisation

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy, pursuant to his answer on 20 November regarding the payment of a licence fee to MCA Merchandising for the use of the Herman Munster copyright in the Frank N. Stein advertising campaign, what proportion of payments by WCRS to MCA for breach of copyright will be passed on to the Department by way of mark-up, commission, contingency fees or other contractual arrangements with identical practical effect.

Mr. Baldry: The Government paid £6,000 as a contribution to the licence fee. No payments in excess of this figure will be paid to WCRS, in this respect, by any other means.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy, pursuant to his answer of 21 November, what was the cost of indemnity insurance against any breach of copyright claims related to the Frank N. Stein advertising campaign for the flotation of the electricity distribution companies; which insurance company provided the cover; what was the excess agreed in the cover; and what part of the costs were charged to his Department by WCRS.

Mr. Baldry: Indemnity insurance is a matter for the advertising agency WCRS. Her Majesty's Government have not made and will not make any payments in respect of costs associated with indemnity insurance.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy, pursuant to his reply of 20 November, *Official Report*, column *84*, if he will place in the Library the supporting visual evidence adduced by MCA Merchandising in support of its claim for licence fees in respect of the electricity privatisation advertising campaign.

Mr. Baldry: The material sent to WCRS by MCA has been retained by WCRS.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy, pursuant to his answer of 21 November, *Official Report*, column *147*, what percentage of the licence fee paid to MCA Merchandising in respect of the electricity distribution company flotation campaign his Department's contribution represented.

Mr. Baldry: Her Majesty's Government paid £6,000 as a contribution to the licence fee. The terms of the arrangements between WCRS and MCA Merchandising are a matter for the parties concerned.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy, pursuant to his answer of 21 November, what assurances he sought from Slaughter and May as to its expertise in the law of copyright.

Mr. Baldry: Her Majesty's Government consulted a specialist in Slaughter and May in the field of intellectual property rights.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether any time limit applies to the personal indemnity clause applying to all future legal claims against him by new shareholders in the electricity distribution companies by virtue of the outbreak of war in the Gulf.

Mr. Baldry: No such personal indemnity clause exists.

Energy Efficiency Office

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy, pursuant to his answer of 21 November, if he will give the full establishment figure of the Energy Efficiency Office; how many staff are directly employed in giving direct advice to the public on energy efficiency; and how many of these are principally concerned with the domestic sector.

Mr. Baldry: The EEO's staff complement is 76; all of these and of the similar number of non-EEO staff supporting EEO programmes principally in the energy technology and building research energy conservation support units, are engaged in work relating to the production and dissemination of advice on energy efficiency. Advice is made available to householders through the provision of literature and in response to inquiries, but there are no staff for whom giving advice direct to householders is the principal part of their duties.

Research and Development

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the recent decisions taken and matters reviewed at the energy research and development sub-committee of the European Communities scientific and technical research committee; which United Kingdom civil servants participate in the committee; and what matters concerning United Kingdom energy decisions are expected to be taken at future energy sub-committee meetings of CREST.

Mr. Moynihan: The energy sub-committee, on which my Department represents the United Kingdom, of the European Communities scientific and technical research committee (CREST) gives advice to CREST on the technical scope of the non-nuclear energy sub-programmes of the framework programmes. It has recently been reviewing the possible scope of the non-nuclear energy sub-programme under the third framework programme.

The work undertaken under the non-nuclear energy sub-programme of the third framework programme is anticipated to give rise to information which will better inform the United Kingdom's and other member states' understanding of the energy scene.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on United Kingdom participation on the non-nuclear energy management and co-ordination advisory committee of the European Communities; which British officials have participated in the committee since its inception; and what advice on wave power programmes has been given by United Kingdom representatives to the committee.

Mr. Moynihan: The committee of an advisory nature on the non-nuclear energies sub-programmes of the framework programmes advises on the implementation of these sub-programmes, not on their technical scope; the non-nuclear energy sub-programmes under the first and second (the current) framework programmes did not include wave power within their scope.

An energy sub-committee, on which my Department represents the United Kingdom, of the scientific and technical research committee (CREST) is currently advising upon the technical scope of the proposed non-nuclear energies sub-programme of the third framework programme. The United Kin informed the Commission of its current revi energy and has supported the view that wa should be eligible for consideration sub-programme.

Thermie Programme

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State f he will make a statement on benefits to Kingdom of the EEC Thermie program promotion of technological innovations and tion projects in the energy field.

Mr. Moynihan: The Thermie programm programme and projects have not yet commer Kingdom companies which prove to be applicants will receive financial support under my Department has been publicising the deta

The programme will have a substantial elem to the dissemination of the results of demon new energy technology. The wider use of suc technology will be of benefit to the United K

Energy Supply

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State f he will list the United Kingdom projects inv European Communities programme on j tunities for unconventional or long-term ene

Mr. Moynihan: The information requeste provided in the time available as this involve several hundred projects. I will write to the h

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State what volumes of high-level nuclear waste produced from reprocessing of imported nuclear fuel for reprocessing at *(a)* Sellafi Dounreay in every year since 1979; and whe will be returned to the countries of origin.

Mr. Baldry: Imported irradiated nucle processed at Sellafield since 1979 will approximately 15 cu m of vitrified high-lev which approximately 8 cu m will arise from c return of waste options. Since 1976, BNFL's the reprocessing of overseas spent fuel ha options for the return of wastes arising. The intend that these options should be exercis wastes should be returned. High-level wa returned as soon as practicable after vitri irradiated nuclear fuel has been imported to reprocessing since 1979.

SCOTLAND

Special Care Baby Units

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary Scotland if he will list the number of speci units available in hospitals throughout Scotl number of places, the number of babies trea care baby units in the last two years for whi available and the number of babies turned units were full for the same period.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information on special care baby units in Scotland is shown in the table.

Information on the number of babies not admitted when units are full is not centrally available.

	Year 1989	1990
Hospitals with special care baby units	25	25
Total number of places		
Bed complement[1]	549	531
Average available staffed beds	543	520
Number of patients		
Inpatient discharges	12,925	12,257

[1] Figures as at 31 March.

Rates (Non-payment)

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give, broken down into the smallest district or region available, the numbers of people *(a)* arrested and *(b)* imprisoned for non-payment of (i) domestic and (ii) industrial and commercial rates in each of the last five years of the operation of the general rates system.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Information is not available in the form requested. The number of applications for civil imprisonment for non-payment of rates and taxes disposed of by the Scottish courts in the years 1984 to 1988 are given in the table. The Debtors (Scotland) Act 1987, which came into operation on 30 November 1988, abolished civil imprisonment for failure to pay rates or any tax.

	Applications
1984	90
1985	7
1986	2
1987	1
1988	None

Planning Appeals

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland on how many occasions since June 1979 planning appeals in relation to proposed developments in the constituency of the Minister responsible for the Scottish Development Department have required to be processed by other Scottish Office Ministers.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 19 November 1990]:* None which has been considered to date.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish the arrangements for processing planning appeals which arise in relation to proposed developments in the constituencies of Ministers.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 19 November 1990]:* No. No such formal arrangements exist. In determining any such planning appeals, however, care is taken to pay proper regard to the need to ensure that the decision is seen to be reached in a correct and impartial manner.

Child Care, Fife

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State f Scotland (1) if he will list the meetings or discussions he with Sheriff Brian Kearney during the inquiry into chi care policy in Fife region; and if he will make a statemer

(2) if he plans to meet Sheriff Kearney to discuss t progress of the inquiry into child care policy in Fife.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 12 Novemb 1990]:* From time to time officials of the social wo services group meet Sheriff Kearney to hear about t stage reached in the inquiry and to take his view on future timetable. These contacts will continue. T progress of the inquiry is a matter for Sheriff Kearney decide taking account of the need to ensure a fair a thorough hearing for all the parties concerned.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State f Scotland if he will make it his policy that his Departme will pay the full costs of the inquiry into child care poli in Fife.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 18 Novemb 1990]:* Once he receives the report of the inquiry t Secretary of State will consider in accordance with secti 210(7) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 19 whether the expenses of the inquiry should be paid to a extent by the local authority or any other party to t inquiry. The costs of running the inquiry, which a currently being met from Scottish Office votes, embra salaries, travel and subsistence, shorthand services a legal fees. Fife regional council is responsible for meeti its own expenses in preparing for and being represented the inquiry.

The Gulf

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotla what instructions have been given to health boards Scotland regarding the preparations for casualties arrivi from any conflict in the Gulf; and what resources are bei set aside to meet any such contingencies.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 29 Novemb 1990]:* Health boards have been instructed to consic possible arrangements for the reception and hospi treatment of any casualties who, in the event of conflict the Gulf, might subsequently arrive in Scotland.

While facilities which might be required have be identified, at this stage no resources have been set asi specifically to meet this contingency.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Grain

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Minister of Agricultu Fisheries and Food what was *(a)* the total tonnage a *(b)* the value of grain production in (i) the United Sta of America (ii) the EEC and (iii) the United Kingdom each year since 1979.

Mr. Curry: The information requested is set out in t table:

	United States of America			European Community[2,3]		United Kingdom
	Quantity[1] mill. tonnes	Value[1] $ billion	Value[4] BECU	Quantity mill. tonnes	Value BECU	Quantity mill. tonnes
1979	296·5	31·5	23·0	114·1	12·5	17·4
1980	263·1	33·4	24·0	120·0	14·5	19·5
1981	322·4	34·6	31·0	122·8	16·0	19·6
1982	326·0	36·0	36·7	131·8	18·9	21·9
1983	202·9	25·5	28·7	124·0	18·2	21·3
1984	308·2	33·1	42·0	151·3	22·8	26·6
1985	340·8	33·1	43·4	138·6	19·8	22·5
1986	309·0	20·0	20·3	154·2	22·0	24·5
1987	274·3	22·3	19·3	154·6	21·3	21·7
1988	199·0	22·4	18·9	164·4	22·7	21·1
1989	276·8	n/a	n/a	162·1	19·6	22·7

Notes:
[1] Unites States production values for wheat and coarse grains excluding rice. No information is readily available about how been valued and the figures may not be comparable with those shown for the EC. *Source:* USDA.
[2] Quantity relates to harvested production: value relates to cereals output i.e. sales off farms adjusted for stock change: rice is ex Eurostat.
[3] Relates throughout to EC9, 1979-80; EC10, 1981-85 and EC12 thereafter.
[4] Billion European Currency Units: converted for $ by MAFF.

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was *(a)* the total tonnage and *(b)* the total value of grain exports from (i) the United States of America, (ii) the EEC and (iii) the United Kingdom in each year since 1979.

Mr. Curry: The information requested is table.

	United States of America			European Community		United Kingdom	
	Quantity[1] mill. tonnes	Value[1] $ bn.	Value[4] BECU	Quantity[2] mill. tonnes	Value[2] BECU	Quantity[3] mill. tonnes	Value[3] £m.
1979	108·0	11·6	8·4	12·4	1·6	1·23	126·7
1980	111·4	15·8	11·4	17·1	2·7	2·98	313·4
1981	107·7	18·6	16·6	21·9	4·0	4·99	532·6
1982	93·6	14·7	15·0	17·8	3·4	5·10	609·8
1983	95·0	12·8	14·4	20·6	3·7	4·45	561·3
1984	94·9	15·0	19·0	22·3	4·6	6·48	792·1
1985	60·9	11·4	14·9	24·2	4·6	5·26	614·0
1986	73·1	7·4	7·5	21·9	3·0	8·48	946·7
1987	95·6	6·8	5·9	24·6	2·2	7·64	595·6
1988	99·8	9·8	8·3	25·1	2·8	5·12	428·9
1989	102·5	10·2	9·3	29·8	4·4	6·94	665·5

Notes:
[1] Exports of wheat, coarse grain (excluding rice) and products for fiscal years. *Source:* USDA.
[2] European Community exports to non-EC destinations. Figures relate to EC9 for 1979-80, EC10 for 1981-85 and EC12 for Export data covers cereals (excluding rice) plus products of the milling industry including starch but excluding leguminous and potatoes. Quantities of grain products are not converted to grain equivalent. *Source:* Eurostat.
[3] United Kingdom exports of grain include malt, but exclude rice. Tonnage figures for grain products are not converted to g Exports cover shipments to rest of EC plus third country destinations. *Source:* HM Customs and Excise.
[4] BECU: billion European Currency Units: conversions from $ and £ have been made by MAFF.

Beta-agonists

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has any information relating to the use of beta-agonists as growth promoters; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: Veterinary medicinal products cannot be placed on the market unless a product licence has been issued under the Medicines Act 1968. No such licences have been issued for the use of beta-agonists as growth promoters.

In Great Britain, members of the state veterinary service carry out a regular programme of surveillance at slaughterhouses and on farms for veterinary residues in animal products, including tests for the beta-agonists clenbuterol and salbutamol. These employ extremely sensitive procedures to detect residues of beta-agonists. No evidence of abuse has been detected.

We also have a monitoring programme on meat and offal for retail sale from all sources, as part of routine food safety surveillance. Under this programme testing for residues of beta-agonists in impo ensure that we guard against the alleged prob countries.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH

Saudi Arabia Tunnel Disaster

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of Stat and Commonwealth Affairs if he will mak setting out the latest information about m citizens in Saudi Arabia following the tunn 2 July.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Saudi Arabian a still unable to trace the three missing Bri Consular department of the Foreign and Co Office has obtained fingerprints of two of which are being sent out to Jedda for com victims' fingerprints taken before burial.

learned Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office raised this matter on 27 November 1990 with the Saudi Arabian ambassador, who agreed to provide all the assistance that he could.

Katyn Massacre

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth of 21 November, *Official Report*, column *252*, what representations have been or will be made to the Soviet Union about its now admitted responsibility for the Katyn massacres.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: British embassy officials in Moscow have, on instructions, twice asked the Soviet authorities if legal proceedings will be instituted against General Soprunenko, a former Red Army officer who has been implicated in the Katyn massacre. They have received no substantive reply yet.

Mr. Sherrard Cowper-Coles

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will place in the Library a copy of the speech made by the first secretary of the British embassy in Washington, Mr. Sherrard Cowper-Coles, to the conference organised by the Investor Responsibility Research Centre in Boston.

Mr. Hurd: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) on 29 November at column *456*.

Departmental Papers

Mr. Gardiner: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which of his Department's papers have been made available to the public since 1 October 1989.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Between 1 October 1989 and 30 September 1990, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office—excluding the Overseas Development Administration—made the following papers available to the public on request:

Africa
- British Policy towards South Africa
- Libya: Twenty Years After Qadhafi's Revolution
- Namibia: Chronology April-September 1989
- Namibia: Chronology October 1989-Independence
- Nile Waters
- President de Klerk's First Six Months: South African Chronology
- Transport Routes in Southern Africa

Americas
- Britain and Argentina: Restoring Relations
- Central American Peace Process: Chronology February 1988-February 1990
- Cuba: The Only One in Step?
- Drugs in the Caribbean
- Threats to the Amazon

Asia/Near and Middle East
- Change in Mongolia
- Events in Burma: Chronology
- Islamic Resurgence
- Israeli Policy and Practices in the Occupied Territories
- Korea: Chronology of the North-South Dialogue
- Repatriation of Vietnamese Boat People from Hong Kong
- Sino-South Korean Relations
- Vietnam 1990

Soviet Union and Eastern Europe
- East Europe's Rejection of Communism
- Environmental Pollution in the USSR and Eastern Europe
- Environmental Pollution in the USSR
- Environmental Pollution in Eastern Europe
- Soviet Aid
- Soviet and East European Aid to Special Friends
- Soviet Foreign Trade
- Soviet Policy in the Middle East
- Who's Who in the USSR

Disarmament
- Arms Control and Disarmament Quarterly Review No. 16
- Arms Control and Disarmament Quarterly Review No. 17
- Arms Control and Disarmament Quarterly Review No. 18
- Arms Control Agreements
- Arms Control and Defence: The Vital Issues
- British Non-Proliferation Policy
- Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions in Europe (MBFR): History of the Negotiations
- Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty
- UK Role in Arms Control
- Verification of Arms Control Agreements

Economic
- Aid to the Developing World
- World Food Supplies

International
- AIDS: The Situation Worldwide
- Annual Review of Consular Work 1989
- Disposing of and Reducing Radioactive Waste
- New Era for the Non-Aligned Movement
- World Peace Council: A New Role?
- World Population Issues

DEFENCE

Low Flying

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the average time spent at low level in *(a)* sorties which contain low-flying elements and *(b)* all sorties.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The information requested is not readily available but it is estimated that the average time spent at low level during sorties using the United Kingdom low-flying system is some 40 minutes.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give a breakdown, for each type of Royal Air Force aircraft, of the number of *(a)* hours and *(b)* sorties flown at low level in each year since 1979.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) on 26 July 1990 at column *527*, and to my Department's evidence to the Defence Committee inquiry into low flying (HC 120, page 140), which give information on the number of low-level sorties carried out annually by Royal Air Force aircraft since 1979. I regret that central records do not provide information on the number of hours flown at low level by individual Royal Air Force aircraft types.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many low-flying sorties were carried out over the United Kingdom in the month of September.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The number of low-flying sorties flown in the United Kingdom during September were 11,361.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether any decision has been made on the locations for Harrier GR7 night-time low-flying training.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: No.

Nuclear Non-proliferation

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he last discussed non-proliferation issues with his NATO counterparts.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) on 30 October 1990 at column *503*.

Ministry of Defence Po

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of how many (i) complaint cases and (ii) against the conduct of Ministry o personnel received during (1) the period 30 September 1986, (2) the period 1 O December 1987, (3) 1988 and *(a)* withdrawn, *(b)* informally resolve *(d)* waived, *(e)* unsubstantiated and and how many are currently pending.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Details of th and complaint matters completed durin (which are the periods covered by succes chief constable) are as follows:

Method of disposal	*1 October 1985 to 30 September 1986* Complaint		*1 October 1986 to 31 December 1987* Complaint		*1 January 1988 to 31 December 1988* Complaint		*1 January 31 Decem* Comp
	cases	*matters*	*cases*	*matters*	*cases*	*matters*	*cases*
Withdrawn	15	[1]	14	3	11	10	20
Informally resolved	Nil	Nil	13	Nil	7	5	14
Ill-founded	Nil	Nil	3	1	4	4	1
Waived	1	[1]	3	Nil	4	4	3
Unsubstantiated	19	[1]	18	3	34	22	49
Substantiated	17	[1]	9	1	13	1	2
Currently pending	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	1	3	7

[1] Figures not available.

However, these cases were not necessarily recorded and completed within the same reporting periods. The result of cases recorded during the corresponding periods could not be provided without disproportionate effort.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current backlog of refresher training for constables and sergeants in the Ministry of Defence police; and what are the equivalent figures for each of the last five years.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: It is force policy that all constables and sergeants should attend a three-week refresher course at the police training school every five years, unless in their last three years of service. The backlog of officers awaiting such training has been:

	Constable	*Sergeant*
1986	843	181
1987	1,129	240
1988	813	96
1989	610	127
1990	821	126

However, during 1985 and 1986 all officers serving in England and Wales underwent a minimum of three days' training, consequent on the introduction of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984.

Since all recruitment training is also carried out at PTS where student accommodation is limited to 160 beds, during high levels of recruitment, such as the current year, the capacity available for refresher and other in-service training is cut.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current annual budget for each geographical division of the Ministry of Defence police; and what are equivalent figures for each year since reorganisation.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The geographical divisions of the MOD police do not have separate budgets.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of what is the current annual budget for s Defence police personnel on external co equivalent figures for each of the last fi which subheads of which votes these fi

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The annual b training fees for the MOD police fo previous five years have been:

FY	
1985-86	
1986-87	
1987-88	
1988-89	
1989-90	
1990-91	

These sums fall on vote subhead training outside MOD, mainly with police forces, for which charges are ma

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of what steps are being taken to ensure th public can easily differentiate betwee (ii) vehicles of the Ministry of Defence Department forces, in particular the M

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: It is the De strongly supported by Her Majesty constabulary, that the Ministry of De force of civilian police officers operati Act, should be brought into line whe Home Department police forces. In f policy, the uniforms and vehicles o Defence police are similar to but not i constabularies, differing only in the diff badges, buttons, logos, and so on.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of (1) if he will make a statement on

Netheravon for public order training by the Ministry of Defence police; whether there is any transfer of funds from the Ministry of Defence police to the Army Air Corps for use of this facility; and what other bases and facilities are used by the Ministry of Defence police for public order training;

(2) how many personnel from the Ministry of Defence police have undergone public order training in each of the last five years;

(3) if he will make a statement on the nature of public order training given to the Ministry of Defence police;

(4) what has been the cost of providing public order training for the Ministry of Defence police for each of the last five years; and from which subheads of which votes this money was taken.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to him by my hon. Friend the Member for Hove (Mr. Sainsbury) on 5 July 1988 at column *537*.

In common with all other police forces in the country MOD police officers undergo public order training in accordance with standards laid down by ACPO.

All MDP officers receive three days' public o training during their recruit course; two days included until 1989 in the three-week long five-y refresher course for constables; and five-day course public order for ranks up to inspector are held from to time. All these courses take place at the MOD p training school at Medmenham.

Officers of ranks from sergeant to chief superinten attend specialist courses connected with public ord Home Department police schools, notably that o West Yorkshire constabulary; and chief officers a public order seminars held at the police staff co Bramshill.

In addition, during an MDP officer's se continuation training is given locally on an opport basis, or when required in anticipation of a parti event. Examples of the latter are the use of Quedgeley in conjunction with the Gloucester constabulary in 1986 and 1987; and of AAC Nether in 1988 and 1989 by officers standing by for the sur solstice activities at Stonehenge.

The numbers of MDP officers given public o training over the past five years are:

	At MOD PTS Medmenham			*At Home Department Police Schools*	
	Constable		*Constable to Inspector*	*Sergeant to Chief Superintendent*	
	Recruit course	*Refresher course*	*Public Order course*	*Public Order course*	*Total numbers trained*
1986	726	0	26	65	817
1987	548	142	94	31	815
1988	150	752	514	5	1,421
1989	113	0	359	14	486
1990	453	0	46	14	513

The variation in numbers undergoing such training at PTS will be noted. When the number of recruits passing through the school is small, its resources are more readily available for continuation and specialist training. However, the numbers which can be made available to attend such courses also depend on the levels of operational activity of the force, which since 1988 has been very heavily committed to meet the terrorist threat.

The numbers of officers given public order training locally varies from year to year.

The annual costs of all public order training undertaken at PTS (including that which is part of recruitment or refresher courses) based on student/days, and of external courses at Home Department schools is:

	PTS	*HD police schools*
	£	*£*
1986	136,000	n/a
1987	137,000	n/a
1988	219,000	1,203
1989	156,000	3,238
1990	130,000	1,485

The costs of internal courses and training fall to the manpower and PTS elements of CCMDP's budget, and those for external courses to vote subhead 1L5. No specific costs were associated with the training undertaken at Netheravon and no funds were transferred to MOD (Army) in that connection.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for De how many copies of the Ministry of Defence police a report are printed each year.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Three hundred and fort copies of the chief constable of the Ministry of De police's annual report for 1989 were printed. Si numbers are printed each year.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defe he will place in the Library the latest edition o Ministry of Defence police discipline regulations, tog with any subsequent amendments.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Yes, I will make the nece arrangements.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for De (1) what is the total annual budget of the Minist Defence police; what are the equivalent figures for ea the last five years; and from which subheads of which these funds are taken;

(2) what is the annual budget for *(a)* personnel *(b)* vehicles and *(c)* equipment excluding vehicle Ministry of Defence police; what are the equivalent fi for each of the last five years; and from which subhea which votes these funds are taken.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: A separate budget coverin manpower, clothing and some support costs of the police was introduced on 1 April 1988. The vehicles

by the force continue to be provided by the units or establishments at which MDP is stationed or by MOD(Army) if specialist vehicles are required. Prior to that date costs of the MOD police fell largely on the users of its services, and were not separately identified.

Figures for the annual budget since 1 April 1988 are as follows:

Financial year	*Manpower £ million*	*Non-manpower £ million*	*Total £ million at current financial year prices*
1988-89	95·603	0·652	96·255
1989-90	103·181	0·976	104·157
1990-91	113·301	0·757	114·058

These funds fall within vote subheads 1D2, 1E1, 1G1, 1G2 and 1L9.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the annual operating cost of running a separate radio system for the Ministry of Defence criminal investigation department; and from which budget these costs are taken.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The annual cost of maintaining the specialist radio equipments used by the CID, which are similar to those of Home Department police forces, is £1,300.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the future of the operational support unit of the Ministry of Defence police.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The future composition and deployment of the operational support unit is under review. Like other police forces, there is a continuing case for CCMDP to have readily available a body of well-trained officers who can be deployed to back up stations whose resources are insufficient to meet current or temporary situations.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what has been the number of complaint cases made against members of the Ministry of Defence police at RAF Greenham Common since the byelaws were declared invalid;

(2) how many complaint matters have been received against members of the Ministry of Defence police at RAF Greenham Common since the byelaws were declared invalid; and if he will list them in the 13 categories used by the Police Complaints Authority.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Between 12 July 1990, the date of the House of Lords judgment on the validity of byelaw 2(b), and 27 November 1990, 34 complaint cases against MOD police officers at RAF Greenham Common were recorded in accordance with section 85(1) of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984.

These involved a total of 53 complaint matters. Details in the form requested are as follows:

(i)	Incivility	5
(ii)	Assault	16
(iii)	Irregularity in procedure	—
(iv)	Traffic irregularity	1
(v)	Neglect of duty	—
(vi)	Corrupt practice	—
(vii)	Mishandling of property	—
(viii)	Irregularity in relation to evidence/perjury	—
(ix)	Oppressive conduct or harassment	7
(x)	Irregular arrest	5
(xi)	Irregular stop/search	2
(xii)	Irregular search of premises	7
(xiii)	Other	10

All these complaints were made by a small number of women associated with protest activity at RAF Greenham Common.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the annual cost of production of the Ministry of Defence police newspaper, "Talk Through"; and from which subheads of which votes these funds are taken.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: "Talk Through" is funded from MOD common services (reprographic services) within vote subhead 1L9, at a current annual cost of £15,000.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is (1) the total procurement cost, and (2) the annual operating cost of the Courgarnet radio system operated by the Ministry of Defence police; and from which subheads of which votes these costs are taken.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The total procurement cost of Courgarnet to date has been £2·651 million; the annual running cost of spares and maintenance is £331,000. These costs fall to vote 2F2.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if Ministry of Defence police are ever deployed to overseas bases.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: One superintendent is currently serving on loan with the sovereign base area police in Cyprus. Otherwise, MOD police officers are deployed overseas and on Her Majesty's ships at sea as and when required to carry out inquiries. There are no MOD police stations outside the United Kingdom.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women are employed by the Ministry of Defence police; and at what ranks they are employed.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The number of male and female MOD police officers by rank on 1 November 1990 was:

	Male	*Female*	*Total*
Chief Constable	1	—	1
Deputy Chief Constable	1	—	1
Assistant Chief Constable	5	—	5
Chief Superintendent	13	—	13
Superintendent	27	—	27
Chief Inspector	56	2	58
Inspector	161	7	168
Sergeant	666	31	697
Constable	3,489	339	3,828
Total	4,419	379	4,798

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the total cost of reorganising the Ministry of Defence police into geographical divisions; and from which subheads of which votes this money was taken.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Reorganising the MOD police into geographical divisions took place on 1 October 1988 as part of a larger major reorganisation of headquarters and higher management, the costs of which, and compensating savings, fell across a number of subheads and cannot be separately identified.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what access the Ministry of Defence police have to the police national computer.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The MOD police do not have direct access to the police national computer. Should MDP require a PNC check, this is normally obtained through the Home Department police force in whose area the MDP station concerned is situated.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many *(a)* male and *(b)* female personnel of the Ministry of Defence police are currently in (i) married quarters and (ii) single persons' accommodation provided by his Department.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The figures are as follows:

	Occupying married quarters	*Occupying single accommodation*
Male Officers	771	[1]107
Female Officers	15	[1]22

[1] Excludes those officers on initial training courses at the MOD police training school.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the policy of his Department regarding the acceptance by members of the Ministry of Defence police of awards given by (i) British and (ii) non-British organisations.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The policy on the granting and receiving of honours and awards to and by members of the Ministry of Defence police is the same as it is for all Crown servants. Rules relating to the acceptance and wearing by Crown servants of awards conferred by foreign states are laid down by the Foreign Office under the Foreign and Commonwealth Order, regulations A and B.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the Ministry of Defence police are consulted during the drafting of new military lands byelaws.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Yes.

Tern Hill Barracks (Bombing)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement regarding the bill sent to West Mercia police for assistance rendered subsequent to the bombing of Tern Hill barracks, Shropshire; what is the sum of this bill; and to which subheads of which votes these funds will be allocated when the bill is paid.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: A bill for approximately £79,500 has been presented to the West Mercia police for logistic support provided by the Ministry of Defence, in assisting the investigation of the explosion at Clive barracks, Tern Hill. This sum covered a number of items, including the provision of meals and temporary shelters, hire of cranes and skips, civil and military transport and contract labour. The bill has been raised in accordance with the normal arrangements for charging the police for logistic assistance from the services. The receipt would be charged to class I, vote 1 subhead LZ(9), which covers receipts for service assistance to civil authorities.

Greenham Common

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many arrests of members of the public have been made at RAF Greenham Common since the byelaws were declared invalid;

(2) how many people have been removed from the area enclosed by the perimeter fence at RAF Greenham Common in each month since the byelaws were declared invalid.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: I remind the hon. Member that despite the House of Lords judgment given on 12 July, concerning byelaw 2(b), there is no right of access to Greenham Common for members of the general public. Details of trespassers removed from the base between that date and 23 November are as follows:

	Number
12 to 31 July	170
August	159
September	127
October	197
1 to 23 November	58
	711

However, many of the above cases involve a relatively small number of persistent trespassers.

Any person suspected of committing a criminal offence remains liable to be arrested and charged accordingly, and that position is not affected by the validity of the byelaws. Since 12 July, 55 arrests have been made at Greenham Common, mainly for causing criminal damage.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what has been the cost of policing RAF Greenham Common since the byelaws were declared invalid.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The cost of policing RAF Greenham Common since 12 July 1990 is of the order of £650,000.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what powers of arrest members of United States forces based at RAF Greenham Common have.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The hon. Member will recall from the answer given to him by my right hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, North (Mr. Stewart) on 28 April 1988 at column *242* that the powers of arrest of United States military personnel in the United Kingdom are the same as those of an ordinary British citizen.

Salisbury Plain

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether there have been any proposals to rewrite the Salisbury plain military lands byelaws in the last five years.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Yes.

Air Defence Systems

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what real-time data links there are between the United Kingdom air defence ground environment system and the Iceland air defence system.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There is one such link.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether data gathered by the AN/FPS-117 radars at Bolafjall and Gunnolfsvikurfjall in Iceland are passed on for use as input data for the United Kingdom air defence ground environment system.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Not at present.

Military Construction

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will list the NATO-funded military construction projects that will be in construction for United States forces at bases in the United Kingdom in the fiscal year 1991;

(2) if he will list the NATO-funded military construction projects that will be in construction for United States forces at bases in the United Kingdom in the fiscal year 1990.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is not the practice to publish information of this kind.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the United States military construction projects in the United Kingdom for which funding was requested in fiscal years *(a)* 1988, *(b)* 1989 and *(c)* 1990 that (i) were given funding approval by the United States Congress, (ii) were approved for construction by Her Majesty's Government, (iii) have started construction and (iv) have had construction halted.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I understand that Congress has granted funding approval for the following United States military construction projects in the following fiscal years.

1988

RAF Alconbury
- Chemical weapons protection
- Squadron operations facility
- Installation of a fire support system*

RAF Bentwaters
- Consolidated support centre*
- Alteration to unaccompanied enlisted personnel housing*
- Digital European backbone (DEB)

RAF Chicksands
- (DEB) telephone exchange*

Croughton
- Improvements to water storage system*

RAF Edzell
- Security Gatehouse*

RAF Lakenheath
- Base operations facility*
- Combat arms range*
- Control tower*

RAF Welford
- Base ground defence igloo*

RAF Wethersfield
- DEB telephone exchange

1989

RAF Bentwaters
- Recreation centre*
- Security Police operations facility*
- Sound suppressor support*

RAF Feltwell
- Passive defence equipment store*

RAF Lakenheath
- DEB communications building*
- Construct unaccompanied enlisted personnel housing*
- Semi-hardened communications facility*

RAF Machrihanish
- Bachelor enlisted quarters*

RAF Mildenhall
- Child development centre*
- Alter/add to water storage*
- Alter/add to operations facility*

RAF Upper Heyford
- Alter/add to vehicle maintenance facility*

RAF Welford
- Fire station*
- Munitions igloos*

1990

RAF Alconbury
- Munitions storage

RAF Barford St. John
- Physical protection*

RAF Bentwaters
- Add/alter fire station
- Add/alter munitions storage
- Add/alter flight simulator facility

Bovingdon
- Site Security*

Christmas Common
- Site Security*

RAF Edzell
- Operations building annex

RAF Fairford
- DEB telephone exchange

RAF Machrihanish
- Operations facility

RAF Mildenhall
- Upgrade sewage treatment plant*

RAF Upper Heyford
- Alter munitions storage

Department of Defence schools
- Bicester Elementary School
- Upwood Elementary School

Those projects indicated thus (*) are known to have started construction. All projects under construction have been approved by Her Majesty's Government. Such approval is a matter for discussion between the Governments of the United States and the United Kingdom. In no cases where construction has started has it been halted.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the United States military construction projects in the United Kingdom for which funding approval was given in fiscal year 1991, giving for each project its location, the nature of facilities to be constructed, and stating for each project whether Her Majesty's Government have given approval for that project being carried out.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The only United States military construction project which is listed against the United Kingdom, in those projects approved by Congress for fiscal year 1991, is for water storage at Menwith Hill.

Given that any necessary planning consents are received, Her Majesty's Government are content that the project go ahead.

United States Air Force

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has on the number of personnel of the United States air force office of special investigations who are currently stationed in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There are 73 people assigned to the United States air force office of special investigations in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what powers personnel of the United States air force office of special investigations stationed in the United Kingdom have to (i) question, and (ii) arrest British subjects.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The powers of questioning and arrest of United States military personnel in the United Kingdom are the same as those of an ordinary British citizen.

Electromagnetic Radiation

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what research his Department has carried out into the hazards of electromagnetic radiation on ordnance in the last five years;

(2) what research his Department is currently carrying out into the hazards of electromagnetic radiation on ordnance.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Within the research programme, ordnance components are tested against the hazards of electromagnetic radiation for safety reasons. It is not our policy, however, to give specific details of current research.

Cruise Missiles

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what has been the cost of policing *(a)* dispersal exercises in support of the ground-launched cruise missile deployment to the United Kingdom, (ii) RAF Greenham Common and (iii) RAF Molesworth for each year since 1981.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The policing of these exercises and locations has involved varying numbers of MOD police, several Home Department constabularies, and service personnel. Costing information regarding the various employments of these different groups on such duties is not kept in a way which enables an answer to be given.

Chemical Weapons

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his Department's latest assessment of the capability of the Soviet Union to safely destroy its stockpile of chemical weapons.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We assess that the Soviet Union does not at present possess a capability for the large-scale safe destruction of chemical weapons. A draft Soviet state programme for CW destruction has recently been completed, apparently containing a number of alternative options for handling the destruction problem. A decision on the programme is awaited from the Supreme Soviet.

Lanyard Exercises

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all exercises in the Lanyard series for the last five years, giving the exercise location, the numbers and types of aircraft involved, and the numbers of personnel involved.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Details of battalion size airborne exercises over the last five years in the United Kingdom are as follows:

Year/ month	*Location*	*Airborne troops involved*	*Aircraft (all C130)*
1985			
January	Salisbury Plain TA	850	8
March	Salisbury Plain TA	850	16
April	Stanford TA	850	8
June	Stanford TA	825	8
July	Salisbury Plain TA	1,400	16
September	Stanford TA	850	8
October	Salisbury Plain TA	825	8
November	Otterburn TA	1,600	15
1986			
February	Salisbury Plain TA	850	15
April	Salisbury Plain TA	1,600	15
June	Salisbury Plain TA	825	6
July	Salisbury Plain TA	850	16
October	Salisbury Plain TA	1,600	16
November	Scotland	850	16
1987			
February	Salisbury Plain TA	850	10
April	Stanford TA	825	4
May	Otterburn TA	825	17
June	Stanford TA	850	15
July	Salisbury Plain TA	1,600	15
September	Sennybridge TA	1,600	15
November	Scotland	1,600	15
1988			
May	Salisbury Plain TA	825	15
May	Otterburn TA	825	15
July	Salisbury Plain TA	850	15
October	Sennybridge TA	850	15
October/ November	Stanford TA	825	15
1989			
February	Salisbury Plain TA	825	15
June	Stanford TA/Scotland	850	15
July	Salisbury Plain TA	1,600	15
October	Otterburn TA	1,600	15
1990			
April	Stanford TA/Scotland	850	15
May	Salisbury Plain TA	850	15
July	Stanford TA/Scotland	850	15

Desert Uniforms

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all those countries to which former British Army desert uniforms have been exported in the last 10 years.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: It is not possible to identify separately sales of surplus desert uniforms over the last 10 years. However, a wide variety of surplus British Army clothing (with identifying insignia removed) has been sold to a number of countries during that period.

Checkered Flag Exercises

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many days before the start of an exercise in the Checkered Flag series his Department is informed of the intention to hold such an exercise by United States authorities; and if he will list the exercises in the Checkered Flag series that have been held at bases in the United Kingdom in the last five years.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: In June or July of each year, the United States air force seeks approval from the Ministry of Defence for Checkered Flag exercises planned to be held in the United Kingdom in the following United States fiscal year (which commences 1 October).

The following exercises in the Checkered Flag series have been held at bases in the United Kingdom in the last five years:

1985
Coronet Buffalo

1986
Coronet Barracuda
Coronet Chinook
Volant Partner I
Coronet Miami
Coronet Patriot
Salty Bee 86
Coronet Papago
Coronet Comanche
Coronet MobileCoronet Crusader

1987
Coronet Delta
Volant Partner 87-II
Coronet Gemini

1988
Coronet King
Volant Scorpio

1989
Coronet Hoop
Coronet Pine I
Coronet Pine II
Coronet Diamond
Volant Gopher
Coronet PythonCoronet Venom

1990
Coronet Lariat

Nuclear Accident Exercises

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the nuclear weapon accident exercises held by his Department in the last five years.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: For each of the last five years, the number of nuclear weapon accident exercises held by the Ministry of Defence has been as follows:

	Number
1986	3
1987	3
1988	5
1989	3
[1]1990	3

[1] To date.

These figures do not include exercises arranged by units or establishments on a local basis.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defen under what conditions local government officials a Members of Parliament are allowed to observe nucle weapon accident exercises.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Exercises are conducted by t Ministry of Defence to test the effectiveness arrangements for response in the extremely unlikely eve of a nuclear weapons accident. Invitations to observers a limited to those directly involved in emergency respon planning.

Chemicals

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defen what has been his Department's annual consumption *(a)* 1.1.1 trichloroethane, *(b)* 1.1.2 trichlorotrifloroetha and *(c)* trichloroethylene for each of the last five yea what is the latest estimate for consumption of the compounds for the current year; to what purpose each these compounds is put; what substitutes for the compounds have been tested by his Department; and wh other similar chemicals are used by his Department.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: There is no central record of pi consumption of *(a)* 1.1.1 trichloroethane, *(b)* 1.1 trichlorotrifloroethane or of past or current consumpti of *(c)* trichloroethylene and this information cannot provided without disproportionate time and effort. 1.1 trichloroethane, and 1.1.2 trichlorotrifloroethane a controlled substances under the Montreal protocol, a the usage of these substances is now being monitored. T current year's usage is estimated to be 120 and 570 tonn respectively. Trichloroethylene is not included in t Montreal protocol. Each of the substances is a chlorinat solvent and is used for cleaning electronic components a assemblies, cleaning and drying precision parts and me cleaning. The Department is currently investigating the u of aqueous and other solutions for these purposes. T only other similar chemical substance used by t Department is carbon tetrachloride which was added the Montreal protocol as a controlled substance in Ju 1990.

Naval Satellite Communications

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defer what is the nature and purpose of the naval satell communications project; what is the annual cost of t project; and from which subheads of which votes funds this project are taken.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The purpose of naval satell communications is to provide the Royal Navy with secure, reliable, long-distance communications facili The current annual cost to the Royal Navy of procuri and maintaining satellite communication equipment approximately £10 million. Equipment is procured a supported against votes 2E and 2F.

Service Personnel (Illegal Acts)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defer whether it can be any part of the duty of a member of H Majesty's armed forces to participate in an act that contrary to British criminal or civil law.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: A member of Her Majest armed forces who disobeys a lawful command may

charged with an offence under the Services Discipline Acts. To be lawful, a command must not be contrary to British or international law and must be related to military duty.

Nevada Test Site

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many representations his Department received on 14 November regarding the presence of British protesters at the Nevada test site;

(2) how long before the scheduled testing of a British nuclear weapon on 14 November his Department first received reports that there were British protesters at the test site.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Ministry of Defence received a number of telephone calls on 14 November about the presence of British protesters at the Nevada test site. The United States authorities reported the presence of four protesters (three of whom were later confirmed to be British) at the site at about 17.45 GMT. The test was carried out at 19.17 GMT.

Multi-function Information Distribution System

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the multi-function information distribution system programme; what is the proposed financial cost to Her Majesty's Government for each year of proposed involvement in the programme; from which subheads of which votes funds for this project are to be taken; what is the proposed date for start of full-scale development of MIDS; and how many countries are involved in its development.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The United Kingdom is not participating in the multi-function information distribution system (MIDS) low-volume terminal (LVT) full-scale development programme. Five countries are involved in the MIDS LVT development; Germany, Italy, Spain, France and the United States. Full-scale development is due to start in January 1992.

AWACS

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the first United Kingdom AWACS aircraft is expected to become operational.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The first United Kingdom AWACS aircraft will enter service in 1991.

Submarines

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the increased unit costs of the PWR2 following the reduced procurement of submarines under "Options for Change".

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: It is not our practice to comment on matters relating to the design of nuclear-powered submarines.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the project definition study contracts for an SSN integrated communications system.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Project definition studies for a follow-on class of SSN and its associated systems have been deferred pending a decision on the way ahead for the project following my right hon. Friend's 25 July statement on "Options for Change".

Ships (Acoustic Signatures)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what research his Department has carried out in the last 10 years into reducing the acoustic signatures of surface ships operated by his Department.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: We have a continuing research effort in this area, but it is not our policy to provide details of specific research programmes.

Service Personnel (Deaths)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will allow relatives of service personnel who die in accidents to have access to the findings of the board of inquiry into the death.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is already the practice to provide the next of kin of service personnel who die in accidents which are the subject of a board of inquiry with an account of the board's findings.

RAF Aircraft

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give a breakdown, for each type of Royal Air Force aircraft, of the number of *(a)* hours and *(b)* sorties flown in each year since 1979.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The number of hours and sorties flown by in-service RAF aircraft, including display aircraft, in each year since 1979 is shown in the table. The figures for flying hours exclude operational flying during Operation Corporate.

1980

Aircraft type	*Hours*	*Flights*
Andover	6,066	3,849
Buccaneer	6,224	4,381
Bulldog	37,425	45,047
Canberra	21,251	10,860
Chinook	11	8
Chipmunk	22,900	47,375
Devon	3,761	3,241
Dominie	10,455	4,569
Gazelle	9,965	11,121
Harrier	15,411	19,063
Hawk	32,349	34,339
Hercules	35,624	13,747
HS125	2,048	1,698
Hunter	15,084	17,078
Hurricane	92	136
Husky	252	548
Jaguar	36,497	31,401
Jet Provost	68,547	72,703
Jetstream	4,115	2,942
Lancaster	56	69
Lightning	7,978	9,413
Meteor	176	252
Nimrod	17,248	3,165
Pembroke	1,749	1,174
Phantom	31,407	22,381
Puma	11,663	12,139
Sea King	6,473	4,635
Sea Prince	2	1
Shackleton	5,646	1,032
Spitfire	128	158
Tornado	135	94
Vampire	61	125

Aircraft type	Hours	Flights
VC10	14,953	4,117
Victor	5,606	1,628
Vulcan	19,431	5,612
Wessex	25,523	26,907
Whirlwind	7,578	7,981

1981

Aircraft type	Hours	Flights
Andover	5,840	3,426
Buccaneer	12,971	8,841
Bulldog	38,327	47,406
Canberra	18,583	9,781
Chinook	2,580	1,770
Chipmunk	20,709	41,017
Devon	3,357	2,804
Dominie	9,699	4,580
Gazelle	10,944	12,148
Harrier	15,426	19,380
Hawk	38,500	42,448
Hercules	32,279	13,630
HS125	1,902	1,690
Hunter	8,819	10,060
Hurricane	132	161
Husky	215	464
Jaguar	32,257	27,907
Jet Provost	65,440	69,629
Jetstream	4,769	3,500
Lancaster	64	71
Lightning	8,042	9,445
Meteor	180	237
Nimrod	15,753	3,073
Pembroke	1,496	1,102
Phantom	30,521	23,284
Puma	13,544	13,204
Sea King	6,569	4,772
Shackleton	3,607	668
Spitfire	117	137
Tornado	2,623	2,095
Vampire	65	127
VC10	10,792	3,103
Victor	5,394	1,688
Vulcan	14,802	4,882
Wessex	24,018	21,676
Whirlwind	4,109	4,154

1982

Aircraft type	Hours	Flights
Andover	6,396	3,887
Buccaneer	14,550	10,298
Bulldog	36,436	43,357
Canberra	12,426	6,869
Chinook	5,875	5,571
Chipmunk	23,734	49,807
Devon	4,159	3,319
Dominie	10,842	5,117
Gazelle	11,054	11,754
Harrier	14,945	18,910
Hawk	41,603	46,919
Hercules	32,849	15,303
HS125	1,860	1,773
Hunter	7,295	8,348
Hurricane	79	105
Husky	259	537
Jaguar	35,675	30,978
Jet Provost	62,241	66,757
Jetstream	4,231	3,357
Lancaster	70	84
Lightning	8,277	10,406
Meteor	133	195
Nimrod	16,620	3,748
Pembroke	1,428	1,044
Phantom	31,266	24,122
Puma	14,736	15,894
Sea King	7,025	4,862
Shackleton	2,438	503
Spitfire	103	131
Tornado	8,377	6,716
Vampire	77	134
VC10	12,747	4,477
Victor	5,172	2,672
Vulcan	5,186	2,218
Wessex	26,488	23,149
Whirlwind	153	176

1983

Aircraft type	Hours	Flights
Andover	6,633	4,059
BAE146	474	354
Buccaneer	13,494	9,233
Bulldog	35,193	43,336
Canberra	12,714	6,795
Chinook	9,886	4,619
Chipmunk	23,914	50,921
Devon	4,212	3,915
Dominie	9,752	4,682
Gazelle	11,380	11,929
Harrier	16,963	20,293
Hawk	40,462	46,378
Hercules	50,964	16,026
HS125	2,900	2,323
Hunter	3,994	4,419
Hurricane	97	111
Husky	320	708
Jaguar	39,309	33,394
Jet Provost	52,750	57,761
Jetstream	4,430	3,073
Lancaster	75	82
Lightning	8,048	9,460
Meteor	99	172
Nimrod	19,398	3,558
Pembroke	1,941	1,382
Phantom	33,589	24,090
Puma	14,638	16,216
Sea King	6,890	4,226
Shackleton	2,279	477
Spitfire	136	142
Tornado	16,481	11,818
Vampire	90	160
VC10	15,396	4,035
Victor	5,971	1,758
Vulcan	2,437	864
Wessex	28,809	26,813

1984

Aircraft type	Hours	Flights
Andover	6,835	4,946
BAE146	696	578
Buccaneer	10,193	6,910
Bulldog	36,355	44,532
Canberra	13,547	7,098
Chinook	9,746	4,945
Chipmunk	25,560	54,013
Devon	1,469	1,343
Dominie	9,192	4,429
Gazelle	12,472	12,678
Harrier	17,165	19,944
Hawk	39,174	44,439
Hercules	46,531	16,064
HS125	5,308	4,972
Hunter	1,915	2,197
Hurricane	96	105
Husky	377	875
Jaguar	31,653	27,424
Jet Provost	55,828	60,984
Jetstream	4,688	3,241
Lancaster	74	87
Lightning	8,088	10,033
Meteor	103	179
Nimrod	19,248	3,591
Pembroke	2,002	1,414

Aircraft type	Hours	Flights
Phantom	34,193	24,500
Puma	15,235	15,163
Sea King	8,075	4,739
Shackleton	2,360	473
Spitfire	124	111
Tornado	27,104	18,739
Tristar	1,950	497
Vampire	90	154
VC10	16,317	4,475
Victor	6,182	1,824
Vulcan	641	257
Wessex	29,313	26,953

1985

Aircraft type	Hours	Flights
Andover	6,749	4,902
BAE146	132	114
Buccaneer	8,289	5,751
Bulldog	34,112	41,711
Canberra	11,530	6,421
Chinook	10,599	6,258
Chipmunk	26,821	57,430
Devon	71	60
Dominie	9,139	4,199
Gazelle	12,275	12,410
Harrier	16,480	20,321
Hawk	40,793	45,366
Hercules	45,536	17,412
HS125	4,740	4,818
Hunter	1,239	1,384
Hurricane	108	128
Husky	327	774
Jaguar	21,364	18,598
Jet Provost	52,824	57,828
Jetstream	5,073	3,467
Lancaster	79	83
Lightning	7,585	8,951
Meteor	98	164
Nimrod	17,839	3,362
Pembroke	1,852	1,279
Phantom	32,809	25,273
Puma	15,022	16,121
Sea King	8,569	5,121
Shackleton	2,159	432
Spitfire	135	138
Tornado	36,095	25,331
Tristar	1,874	426
Vampire	83	148
VC10	14,657	4,346
Victor	5,310	1,744
Vulcan	86	54
Wessex	29,002	28,048

1986

Aircraft type	Hours	Flights
Andover	6,016	3,780
BAE146	749	501
Buccaneer	8,746	5,963
Bulldog	38,981	46,555
Canberra	11,867	6,606
Chinook	12,479	7,146
Chipmunk	26,810	56,409
Devon	68	76
Dominie	10,463	4,841
Gazelle	12,195	12,344
Harrier	18,909	22,209
Hawk	42,776	47,255
Hercules	45,933	16,203
HS125	4,765	4,779
Hunter	1,671	1,900
Hurricane	93	85
Husky	160	380
Jaguar	20,045	17,015
Jet Provost	57,273	62,439
Jetstream	4,978	3,363
Lancaster	73	64
Lightning	7,456	8,993
Meteor	23	40
Nimrod	20,341	3,833
Pembroke	2,047	1,381
Phantom	36,181	25,580
Puma	15,613	16,721
Sea King	9,434	5,811
Shackleton	2,046	486
Spitfire	138	142
Tornado	47,548	33,939
Tristar	5,291	911
Vampire	25	41
VC10	16,783	5,066
Victor	4,195	1,382
Vulcan	48	32
Wessex	28,771	28,298

1987

Aircraft type	Hours	Flights
Andover	6,234	3,651
BAE146	1,150	949
Buccaneer	8,717	5,969
Bulldog	37,269	46,131
Canberra	11,768	6,650
Chinook	10,928	6,308
Chipmunk	27,008	56,758
Devon	84	72
Dominie	11,223	5,142
Gazelle	11,785	12,066
Harrier	18,113	21,757
Hawk	40,843	44,390
Hercules	40,571	15,604
HS125	4,737	4,951
Hunter	1,390	1,627
Hurricane	58	68
Husky	293	675
Jaguar	18,638	15,452
Jet Provost	54,194	58,731
Jetstream	5,031	3,529
Lancaster	47	48
Lightning	5,768	6,775
Meteor	40	60
Nimrod	19,339	3,589
Pembroke	727	495
Phantom	30,122	21,406
Puma	14,718	15,551
Sea King	8,118	5,372
Shackleton	2,122	503
Spitfire	134	126
Tornado	49,481	35,235
Tristar	5,702	1,172
VC10	15,214	4,845
Victor	3,002	1,267
Vulcan	52	43
Wessex	28,366	28,170

1988

Aircraft type	Hours	Flights
Andover	6,736	3,939
BAE146	1,055	975
Buccaneer	9,096	5,849
Bulldog	37,375	45,394
Canberra	12,716	7,111
Chinook	11,175	6,172
Chipmunk	29,521	60,186
Devon	135	104
Dominie	10,945	5,097
Gazelle	12,261	12,096
Harrier	18,068	21,299
Hawk	41,207	45,136
Hercules	46,522	17,042
HS125	5,876	5,529
Hunter	1,221	1,306

Aircraft type	Hours	Flights
Hurricane	93	112
Jaguar	18,987	15,723
Jet Provost	49,039	53,422
Jetstream	4,905	3,486
Lancaster	64	68
Lightning	1,362	1,393
Meteor	24	33
Nimrod	18,162	3,500
Pembroke	496	315
Phantom	29,149	20,518
Puma	15,577	15,907
Sea King	8,699	5,820
Shackleton	2,315	607
Spitfire	124	138
Tornado	62,498	43,411
Tristar	6,481	1,269
Tucano	156	144
VC10	16,517	5,097
Victor	3,498	1,175
Vulcan	71	51
Wessex	30,166	29,318

1989

Aircraft type	Hours	Flights
Andover	6,304	3,751
BAE146	1,117	1,019
Buccaneer	8,509	5,549
Bulldog	37,698	45,173
Canberra	12,342	6,930
Chinook	10,114	5,766
Chipmunk	27,149	57,377
Devon	63	50
Dominie	9,842	4,719
Gazelle	11,110	11,131
Harrier	17,783	20,171
Hawk	38,386	43,122
Hercules	44,127	17,534
HS125	5,526	5,192
Hunter	997	1,129
Hurricane	82	85
Jaguar	15,142	12,158
Jet Provost	46,345	49,889
Jetstream	4,734	3,212
Lancaster	65	66
Nimrod	18,170	3,521
Pembroke	593	371
Phantom	25,011	17,639
Puma	14,193	14,433
Sea King	9,015	6,185
Shackleton	2,078	652
Spitfire	116	99
Tornado	68,592	47,644
Tristar	7,554	1,511
Tucano	1,107	1,254
VC10	13,678	4,036
Victor	3,213	1,072
Vulcan	71	69
Wessex	29,672	29,194

Oil Pollution

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessments have been made of the pollution of ground water by aviation fuel in and around airfields operated by his Department and bases operated by United States forces.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Boreholes and drainage outfalls from military airfields, including those made available to the United States air force, are monitored by the Property Services Agency, and the National Rivers Authority as appropriate, to ensure compliance with Community water quality criteria, the Pollution Act 1974, and the Water Act 1989.

US Forces

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State (1) what is the total number of United St personnel based in the United Kingdom;

(2) how many United States military pers each base or facility operated by United States United Kingdom;

(3) what is the total number of United St personnel based in each local authority area o Kingdom.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There are approxim United States military personnel based in Kingdom. The large majority are statio following bases or facilities operated by U forces. The local authority for each establish shown.

Base/facility	Local authority
RAF Alconbury	Huntingdon
RAF Upwood	Huntingdon
RAF Molesworth	Huntingdon
RAF Barkway	North Hertfordshire
RAF Upper Heyford	Cherwell
RAF Barford St. John	Cherwell
RAF Bicester	Cherwell
RAF Fairford	Cotswold
RAF Kemble	Cotswold and North Wiltshire
RAF Little Rissington	Cotswold
London	London borough of Westminster
Ruislip	London borough of Hillingdon
RAF Greenham Common	Newbury
RAF Welford	Newbury
RAF Lakenheath	Forest Heath
RAF Feltwell	Kings Lynn and West Norfolk
RAF Sculthorpe	North Norfolk
Nocton Hall	North Kesteven
RAF Bentwaters/ RAF Woodbridge	Suffolk Coastal
Martlesham Heath	Ipswich
RAF Mildenhall	Forest Heath
Spadeadam	Carlisle
Mormond Hill	Grampion Region
RAF St. Mawgan	Restormel
RAF Chicksands	Mid Bedfordshire
RAF Edzell	Grampion Region
RAF Burtonwood	Warrington
RAF Hythe	New Forest
RAF Caerwent	Monmouth
High Wycombe Air station	Wycombe
RAF Uxbridge	London borough of Hillingdon
Eastcote	London borough of Hillingdon
Holyloch	Strathclyde Region
Thurso	Highland Region
RAF Machrihanish	Dumfries and Galloway Region
Glen Douglas	Strathclyde Region

The number of United States personnel Brawdy facility is classified.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether it can be any part of the duty of a member of the United States armed forces based in the United Kingdom to participate in an act that is contrary to British criminal or civil law.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: A member of the United States armed forces based in this country is subject to the requirements of British law in the same way as a member of Her Majesty's armed forces.

Training Committee

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the membership of the Standing Committee on Force Training.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The Standing Committee on Force Training (SCOFT) is an internal MOD police committee charged with the continuing review of all aspects of MOD police training. It is chaired by the deputy chief constable MDP, with the following members:

Assistant chief constable (Scotland)
Assistant chief constable (inspectorate/firearms)
Assistant chief constable (personnel and training)
Commandant, MOD police training school
Divisional commander, G division, MDP
Detective chief superintendent CID
Chief superintendent (personnel and training) MDPHQ
Superintendent (operations) MDPHQ
Superintendent (information technology/inf) MDPHQ
Senior police officer, MOD police, Farnborough
A representative of the Defence Police Federation

The Gulf

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the nature of the training assistance provided by the German Government in relation to the Gulf crisis.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Assistance provided by the German Government has included the greater use of training facilities and equipment training.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will make it his policy to provide information to the House on the outcome of his discussions with other Governments regarding contributions to the cost of the deployment of British forces to the Gulf.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The extent to which this information can be made available depends on a number of factors, including the wishes of the Governments concerned and operational considerations.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he made use of the Baltic Exchange to charter merchant shipping for the transportation of military forces to the Gulf.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Yes.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence with which countries he is discussing the provision of assistance for the deployment of British forces to the Gulf region.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We are continuing to discuss possible support for our deployments with our host nations in the Gulf, our allies in the Western European Union and a number of other countries.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which Governments have provided training assistance for British forces deployed in the Gulf region.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: British forces deploying to the Gulf region have carried out extensive training alongside forces from other countries contributing to the multinational effort. Practical assistance has been provided in particular by Germany, from where the majority of units in 1st (British) armoured division have been drawn, and Saudi Arabia, where they are now based.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has regarding the costs incurred by foreign Governments of chartering merchant shipping for the transportation of military forces to the Gulf region.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We have been given some information on a confidential basis about the costs incurred by the United States.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the response of British shipowners to the need for merchant shipping to transport British forces to the Gulf.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Two British lines have to date offered merchant shipping for this purpose.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps he took to satisfy himself that the merchant shipping chartered for transporting British forces to the Gulf was hired at a rate commensurate with the specific requirements of such a task.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Merchant shipping is chartered for the Ministry of Defence by professional ship brokers who are contracted to obtain the best possible value for taxpayers' money.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what co-ordination has taken place with other Governments in chartering merchant shipping for the transportation of military forces to the Gulf.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: None has been necessary.

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many telephones are currently available for the use of British service men in the Gulf area; and if he has any plans to improve the availability of such communications to enable those service men to keep in contact with their families.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Service personnel in the Gulf have access to the local civilian telephone network. Proposals to establish a welfare telephone link between the Gulf and the United Kingdom and Germany, including the provision of dedicated phones for service use, are under urgent consideration.

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will take steps to improve communications with British service men in the Gulf area by providing a broadcasting service for them.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill) on 27 November 1990 at column *376*.

Leukaemia

Mr. Churchill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence to what cause his Department attributes the condition of myeloid leukaemia developed by Mr. John Baird, a 27-year-old Royal Navy engineer.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: As no claim has been received from Mr. Baird by my Department, it is not possible to attribute a cause to his illness.

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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

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SESSION 1990-91

19th November—30th November 1990

SCOPE OF THE INDEX, ARRANGEMENT AND ABBREVIATIONS

This index is derived from the House of Commons Library's Parliamentary On-Line Information System (POLIS), and the subject terms used are based on those used in POLIS. There are often changes in column numbering, etc, between the daily part or weekly Hansard (which simply collects together the daily parts without revision) and the bound volume. The index for the bound volume is revised to take account of these changes and cannot therefore, be used in connection with the daily part or weekly Hansard. For these versions use the Fortnightly Index.

Scope and arrangement of the Index

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Rulings and Statements by Mr. Speaker and his deputies are brought together under the heading Speaker's rulings and statements.

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The date of each item except Parliamentary Questions is inserted immediately before the reference.

Members' names are given in the form by which they prefer to be known and are printed in bold italics. Under their names, entries are arranged under one of the two headings *Debates etc* (to include interventions on statements, points of order and so on) or *Questions*.

Abbreviations

Bills 1R=first reading, 2R=second reading, Money res=money resolution, Com=Committee stage, Rep=Report stage, 3R=third reading, amendt/amendts=amendment/amendments, *=matter taken formally, without debate.

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